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Gaza: Resistance and solidarity

M Santos

The Albanese government was shaken by the historic March for Humanity over the Sydney Harbour Bridge of 300,000 people as well as other large protest actions around Australia. The mass gatherings swept aside the power brought to bear against protests by the courts and wiped out the pro-Israel deception and lies generated by the mass media.

More and more trade unions are taking a stand, and Labor Party branches continue to pass resolutions calling on the Labor government to take action. There are divisions within Labor's parliamentary caucus.

The Victorian convenor of Labor Friends of Palestine, Oliver van Ingen, said: "There is a huge groundswell of support [for Palestinians] in the party and the broader community. Albanese is correct to call Israel's actions 'completely indefensible,' and these actions must be met by a strong international response."

UN officials have warned that the Israeli cabinet's plans for a fresh offensive aimed at gaining total military control of Gaza City – home to around one million Palestinians – would risk igniting "another horrific chapter" of displacement, death and destruction.

The foreign ministers of Australia, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom condemned Israel's plan in a joint statement late on 8 August, saying it risked "violating international humanitarian law."

China, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Indonesia are amongst others denouncing the actions of Israeli occupation forces. Germany then announced it will halt shipments of military equipment that could be used in Gaza following the Israeli security cabinet's approval of plans to expand the war.

UN WARNINGS

On 10 August the United Nations Security Council held an emergency meeting on Palestine where Council members rang out warnings. China called the "collective punishment" of people in Gaza unacceptable.

Ramesh Rajasingham, head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): "Israel is prolonging the war not to disarm Hamas, but to prevent independent Palestinian statehood. Its goal is the destruction of the Palestinian people through forced transfer and massacres to facilitate its annexation of their land." Such illegal and immoral plans require "the mobilisation of all the tools available to stop them."

Somalia's representative warned that Israel's announcement of its intention to impose military control over the entire Gaza Strip "is not an abstraction. It is a chilling blueprint for the next chapter of devastation." For the two million people still trapped in Gaza it means the "escalation of what has already become hell on earth, literally and figuratively, leading to the world's worst man-made famine."

RECOGNITION

Recognising Palestinian statehood is important but it is only a first political but important step towards ending Israel's genocide and seeing a lasting peace. Recognition MUST be accompanied by concrete action.

The Albanese government must carry out its obligations under international law to do everything it can to end the genocide.

That includes ceasing all trade and cutting off diplomatic relations with Israel. Australia should cancel the $900 million contract it signed with the Israeli arms manufacturing company Elbit and redirect that money to aid for Palestinians.

The Israeli government, clearly coordinating with US imperialism, is openly pursuing a plan to seize control of all of Gaza while subjecting its two million residents, half of whom are children, to displacement, starvation, and death. This campaign of conquest is a genocide. It comes after more almost two years of relentless bombing and war crimes.

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Rally for Palestine held at Forest Place, Boorloo/Perth on Saturday 2nd August.

The Australian government's shameful complicity in this genocide must be condemned

News Corp stands up – for genocide

Peter Farmer

Rupert Murdoch's News Corp is standing solidly with the Netanyahu line that any criticism of an ongoing genocide is akin to Nazism. Investigation by Australian website *Deepcut* has found Instagram posts by Elizabeth Colman, editor of the *Weekend Australian Magazine* implying that the estimated 300,000 people who marched across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and the thousands who marched around Australia to demand government action to support aid for Palestine were equivalent to Nazis.

March organisers aren't impressed. The Jewish Council of Australia's chief executive described the News attack line as cheapening the memory of the Holocaust "with the aim of legitimating Israel's genocide of Palestinians." The Muslim Vote advocacy group told Deepcut that Colman was sanitising real authoritianism. The Palestine Action Group's Amal Naser described her views as "on the wrong side of history."

The false equivalence doesn't seem to have fooled many, with organisations like Jews Against the Occupation showing up to rallies supporting Palestine week in, week out. ✪

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Hiroshima, Nagasaki NEVER AGAIN?

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Real reform, or a treat for the kids?

On 22 July this year, a 20% cut to the HECS/HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) payments students have to make after they finish tertiary education was passed. The ATO will apply it to HECS/HELP debts that were outstanding on 1 June. The cut will cost $16 billion. Labor is very pleased with itself about this. Their website shows a nice big green tick next to 'Achieved,' with the 'cut to student debt' top of a list of achievements. Should the rest of us be just as pleased? Is Labor to be congratulated?

Not really. Every little helps, and it's nice that the HELP debt will be cut by between $670 and $5,835 because of the cut, but the word 'little' is important here. Those supposedly lucky graduates will still have between $14,000 and $125,000 of debt hanging over them. Another dampener on the ALP's self-congratulation is that this debt reduction is a one-off thing. Generations of students, including those making decisions about future study now, will still face massive debts. Anecdotal evidence suggests this is influencing decisions about study.

The government's shiny new report from its Education Summit likes HELP. It says that the "core principles of HELP remain sound – asking students to contribute to the costs of their education later in life through an income contingent loan." Actually HELP fails on those principles alone – a big argument for HELP was that uni students go on to higher incomes, but it's easy for governments to change the threshold so that almost any income triggers repayments.

The problem with HELP debt is much more basic than just how it's implemented. Details like when the debt kicks in or how it's indexed cover a more basic problem – one that should concern all of us. The problem is a neoliberal approach to education. The idea being everyone should pay their own way so that the state can be small and (neoliberals think) efficient. As the corruption and binging on consultants of the Morrison government showed, 'efficient' is not what we get with this approach.

Of course there are exceptions for the military, who never face the sort of scrutiny on spending that other areas do, politicians, and private schools who continue to be generously funded from the taxes of people who can't afford to use them.

The neoliberal mindset treats education as a cost, and an expense, only benefiting the individual who receives it. In fact, education is good for individuals and the whole country.

A lot of people don't use tertiary education. Why should they care about this? Two reasons. Firstly the neoliberal approach doesn't stop at university students. Everything is commodified. This approach applies to TAFES, to healthcare, to aged care and to childcare (as recent scandals in the private childcare sector have shown).

The second reason is that as we've said, education is a positive thing for the whole country, not just for the high school, TAFE, or uni student who gets educated. It makes the nation richer and a better place to live in. Students already contribute to the cost of their education through taxes. They contribute to making Australia a better place through applying the things they've learned.

The Communist Party of Australia stands for free lifelong education; early learning, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, TAFE and universities. This country can afford it and it's good for us. To get it, we'll have to shake off the failed neoliberal mindset.

The need for a Palestinian state

Marcus Browning

In Gaza the glaring moral and legal question is why the 'international community' has gone to so much effort to protect the aggressor, preserve Israel's occupation, and deny the victims any means to defend themselves? If they do not want Palestinians to resist, why do they not themselves confront the aggressor and force an end to the occupation, the siege and dispossession?

When the defenceless population in Gaza was under attack from the region's most powerful military, all calls were to prevent the victims from defending themselves. Meanwhile, endless supplies of sophisticated weaponry were sent to the occupier despite its already massive dominance and indiscriminate and criminal attacks on civilians.

It is necessary to see conflict's root causes in historical context to see the necessity of a Palestinian state.

When Palestinians started their first unarmed uprising in 1987, 40 years after their expulsion from their homes and 20 years after the brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip began, they had no rockets; they had only stones to confront heavily armed occupation forces: they had no state apparatus.

Hamas, as a resistance movement, was born in 1988. Israel, desperate to break the political monopoly of the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, tacitly allowed Hamas to flourish.

Before any Palestinian fired a single shot at the start of the second uprising, in September 2000, Israel had already gunned down dozens of unarmed demonstrators. Palestinians learned these lessons well: Israel will meet any peaceful challenge with lethal force, so one had better be prepared to fight back.

We need to recall these facts to understand the situation without the misrepresentations that serve the US and Israel's interests. The starting point of history is chosen not from the origins of the problem, but from whatever point suits the narrative of the powerful which thrives on division and chaos.

It is a tactic of the perpetrators of the genocide to portray this crime as a "war," which implies a clash between two sides. In fact it is a campaign of extermination against an unarmed civilian population.

Recognition is an important precursor to a negotiated lasting peace settlement which can only be negotiated by two states – Israel and Palestine.

At present some three million or more Palestinians are living under Israeli military occupation. They are illegally denied sovereignty and independence. The symbolic and political nature of recognition is important.

The US blocked the UN Security Council from moving forward on a Palestinian bid to be recognised as a full member state at the UN last year. At the time 12 nations, including Australia, supported the resolution. Britain and Switzerland abstained, and the US exercised its right to veto the resolution.

Professor Shahram Akbarzadeh, director of the Middle East Studies Forum at Deakin University, notes that Australia recognising a Palestinian state would send a strong message to the United States that the "global dynamic is changing."

Quote of the Week

"Debate as entertainment turns real issues into thought experiments, sometimes with people who aren't very good at thinking."

John Delmenico

Gaza: Resistance and solidarity

Continued from page 1

The calls can be heard around the world demanding an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza and all occupied territories, and the lifting of the siege that has created conditions of mass famine.

The whole world, including Australia, must act decisively to prevent the total destruction of Gaza and its people. This includes enforcing the rulings of the International Court of Justice and the Genocide Convention. As Israeli violence escalates exponentially in the West Bank and the expansion of illegal settlements threatens the full annexation of all Palestinian lands, the crimes being committed in full view of the world demand global resistance and urgent solidarity.

The Australian government's shameful complicity in this genocide must be condemned. From providing political cover to continuing arms exports, and remaining silent as hospitals are bombed and families starve, Albanese and his government have made themselves enablers of war crimes.

The cover and support by the media establishment for Israel's crimes, many of whom have demonised protestors while minimising or ignoring Israel's atrocities, has deepened confusion and enabled further escalation.

COMMUNIST DEMANDS

The CPA reaffirms its full support for the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, return, liberation, and demands:

- An immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the withdrawal of Israeli troops
- The lifting of the Israeli siege imposed on Gaza since 2006
- The dismantling of settlements in the West Bank within 12 months, as prescribed by the UN
- The creation of a viable Palestinian state within the pre-June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital
- The right of return for Palestinian refugees from 1948
- The release of all Palestinian political prisoners and an end to arbitrary detentions
- The cutting of all diplomatic ties with Israel
- That the Australian government implement an immediate two-way arms embargo and support Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) on Israel.

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Parasites, productivity, and super funds

Marcus Browning

Recently a Superannuation Lending Roundtable was organised by *The Australian Financial Review* and the Visy cardboard packaging company owned by Anthony Pratt. The headline in the *Australian Financial Review* read "Super lending for corporate debt is a productivity plan." Here the objective of the Productivity Roundtable later this month between government, employer and union representatives is made clear: increased exploitation of workers' labour, and $4.2 trillionin super funds.

Pratt, a high-profile corporate cheerleader of Donald Trump, is known by Visy workers as Pratt the Rat.

The *AFR* editorial, is titled "Tapping the super funds' deep pools of capital to unlock business investment and unleash productivity growth is an idea whose time may have come." It has come – and gone.

In the 2008-09 financial market crash super funds were hit with record losses. Around $200 billion of workers' retirement savings were wiped, and many workers were forced to put off retirement, while retirees returned to work. Workers lost 20- 50 per cent or more depending on how their savings were invested. While workers' savings were haemorrhaging, the financial institutions were using the super funds to help bail themselves and the corporate sector out of the crisis.

The introduction of the compulsory superannuation guarantee by the Keating government in 1992, had a number of aims. These included winding back the publicly funded aged pension; shifting responsibility onto the individual for self-provision during retirement; privatising the provision of retirement income; and providing the private sector with a large and growing source of investment capital.

From the finance sector's perspective, the growth of superannuation funds has been very successful in providing investment capital with a guaranteed continuous income stream recently rising to twelve per cent of wages paid.

The banks, insurance companies, and their various subsidiaries have the use of the super funds that they control to buy shares in themselves and thus prop up and manipulate their own share prices. A conflict of interest if ever there was one! This demonstrates clearly that there is no guarantee that any fund can or does always make investments with the best interests of the workers' and their savings in mind.

On the other hand, superannuation funds have saved the bacon of many corporations and possibly some of the banks and insurance companies.

In the past, a number of the largest corporations listed on the Australian stock market have raised record billions through share issues and other means. They have used this money to wind back debt and purchase bargain-basement priced takeovers that can be found during an economic crisis. A lot of this money came from superannuation funds.

Without this injection of super savings and faced with banks refusing to roll over debt, many private companies would have been in dire straights. Their collapse would have resulted in further losses to super funds. This highlights the contradictions facing workers, the fate of their savings so integrally tied to that of the big corporations which exploit them in the workplace and then profit from their superannuation savings.

TRANSFER RISK

When a person deposits money into a savings account or fixed term deposit the bank guarantees payment of a certain rate of interest and repayment of the sum in full. The bank takes the risk, lending, investing and speculating with that money. The bank carries any losses.

Superannuation transfers all of the risk onto the backs of workers. They are not guaranteed one cent of income and they are not guaranteed that the money they deposit will be there when they come to withdraw it. The financial institutions invest and speculate with the money in their own interests. For the privilege of risking superannuation savings, they then charge crippling fees.

The financial system is making a killing, churning huge profits from control of workers' savings, with workers carrying all the risk.

Industry funds, which are not-for-profit and have trade union as well as employer representation on their boards, consistently outperform the other funds. Industry funds generally do not charge the hefty fees and commissions that private funds impose. While they do to some extent determine the types of investment, they do not have control over day-to-day investments which is done through custodians.

Super savings are subjected to highly speculative practices on stock and futures markets, and in currency trading.

Private funds managers help themselves to outrageous entry fees on deposits, exit fees on withdrawals, a range of commissions, fees for financial planners and other "services." Some charge entry fees of four or six per cent on money paid into a fund, then help themselves to another one or two per cent for financial planning, a bit more for management and so on.

The government has become concerned about hefty fees eating into savings, fearing that super funds will fall short of their objective of replacing the aged pension. Other concerns have been raised about the rising cost of the special tax concessions relating to superannuation savings. These concessions were designed to encourage people to put more money into their funds by such means as salary sacrifice. The rich are rorting them to the hilt, using them to extract tax-free income from their investments in their own personal super funds.

Tax experts estimate that it would be cheaper for the government to make the aged pension universally available than funding the superannuation tax rorts for the rich.

The privatisation of the provision of retirement income is a big boon for the corporate and finance sectors, but it does not and cannot provide security in retirement for all workers. The only way to do that is through the centralised public provision of a pension by government. The aged pension should be universally available and sustained at a level such that retirees can live with dignity with a high standard of living.

Superannuation should be over and above a universal aged pension. Workers should have the option of making contributions to a national superannuation fund, run by and guaranteed by the state. This would be a defined benefit scheme, providing retirees with a guaranteed fortnightly income for the rest of their life. Similar schemes were the norm before the process of privatisation of retirement incomes began.

A national superannuation fund would be of additional benefit to the community, with its funds invested in socially desirable projects such as the building and provision of public housing, public infrastructure, health, education, aged care and other services. Industry and private superannuation funds should be subject to greater regulatory direction governing their investments, including a requirement to invest a certain percentage in government guaranteed public sector projects.

Victoria: 'Alarming pursuit' as bail laws slammed

The Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), The Koorie Youth Council, The Aboriginal Justice Caucus, Federation of Community Legal Centres, Human Rights Law Centre and the Law and Advocacy Centre for Women have collectively condemned the Allan Labor government for their single-minded pursuit of a "tough on crime" agenda at the expense of marginalised and vulnerable populations. They argue that the Bail Further Amendment Bill 2025 is dangerous because it will push people into prison that should not be there. Victoria's bail laws, they say, are at risk of being the most unjust in the country because they will continue to disproportionately target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and entrench poverty and disadvantage.

The organisations that make up the Bail Saves Lives campaign have been very clear that locking people up is not the way to achieve community safety. They say the Bill is irresponsible in the context of escalating remand numbers, deplorable prison conditions and a corrections system at breaking point. VALS calls it "devastating" to see the government using "the growing numbers of people on remand for untested allegations, and who may not ultimately receive a sentence of imprisonment, as an indication of their success."

The Allan Labor government promised that cost-of-living and poverty-related charges, as well as women affected by family violence, would not be caught up in the so-called 'tough' bail tests. The Bill gives a facade of proportionality and reasonableness, but in reality, the new "high degree of probability" test is akin to automatic pre-trial detention. This new test can require children and adults charged with non-violent crimes to overcome a higher bail test than that which currently applies for murder and rape charges. This is inconsistent with the right to liberty, a protection under Victoria's Charter of Human Rights.

VALS acknowledges that the Bill includes a schedule of offences that are exempt from the two-step test. They also appreciate the importance of including pregnancy and caring responsibilities to explicitly guide bail decision makers.

What they say is missing in the government's approach is the necessary investment in community-based and self-determined programs and initiatives that will actually address the underlying causes of alleged offending behaviour.

Nerita Waight, CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service has called the bill "Bad, ill informed, dangerous policy being rushed through to win political votes, and putting Aboriginal peoples' lives at risk on a daily basis."

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Jim Chalmers, another wannabe Labor hero Hawke-ing himself around

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Paid to pollute: big polluters making a mockery of Australia's key climate policy

New analysis reveals how the nation's biggest polluters are making a mockery of Australia's key climate policy, the safeguard mechanism.

The mechanism was designed to force big polluters to reduce their emissions. It was reformed in 2023 and has since become a central plank in the government's net-zero ambitions.

But world-renowned climate analyst and Senior Research Fellow at The Australia Institute, Ketan Joshi, has revealed how the oil and gas industries are using loopholes to continue doing enormous damage to the planet and, in many cases, are being rewarded for doing so.

His analysis finds that the scheme not only sets shamefully weak emissions limits but, when big polluters inevitably (and easily) fall below those limits, they're rewarded with credits which they can sell to other polluters.

"The whole idea of the safeguard mechanism was to limit emissions. In practice, it's just a system which lets companies cheat on their obligations," said Joshi.

Photo: Welp.sk – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

"This isn't just ineffective regulation. This is actually helping fossil fuel companies pollute. It's giving them money.

"Here's an eye-opening example: Chevron's Gorgon facility in WA, one of the highest emitting gas facilities in the world, ended up with an emissions limit that was far, far higher than its 2023-24 emissions – the weakest target the project has ever received.

"Because it was under its limit, it was issued 388,803 'safeguard mechanism credits', which another polluter can buy from Chevron to meet its emissions target. This is despite Gorgon's emissions being the highest they've been since the 2019 financial year."

Australia Institute

WA: Noongar people challenge Michaelia Cash

Noongar businessman and native foods entrepreneur Gerry Matera has sent a powerful message to those opposed to Welcome to Country ceremonies.

His stance on social media was later reinforced with a video of two young Noongars explaining what the ceremony means to Aboriginal people across Australia.

Matera, who runs Gather Foods and other businesses in Western Australia, told *National Indigenous Times* enough was enough, after Liberal MP Michaelia Cash and fellow WA Liberals called for an end to the ceremonies being performed at official functions.

"I don't usually like to get involved or speak out about these issues, but her comments were so misplaced, that I just thought enough was enough," he said.

"When leaders undermine culture, they are undermining the very people who will inherit this land and care for it."

The video message to Cash challenged her recent comments dismissing Welcome to Country.

Co-created by Gather Films and Corroboree for Life, the two young voices in the video from across Noongar Boodjar address Senator Cash personally, expressing their hurt and frustration, while calling for respect, truth-telling and unity, and highlighting the importance of Welcome to Country as a cultural practice and gift of respect.

"Welcome to Country is not just words – it's our way of connecting, protecting, and inviting you onto our land," said Khaia, one of the participants.

"Banning it is banning the truth about where you stand."

The video also points to the South West Native Title Settlement as a landmark agreement that recognised Noongar people as the Traditional Owners of the South West, and urged Senator Cash to acknowledge and uphold the agreement as part of her role representing Western Australians in the Senate.

"These young people are the future custodians of Nyoongar Boodjar. Their voices deserve to be heard, loud and clear," Matera added.

National Indigenous Times

3CR RADICAL RADIO

The *Guardian* encourages readers to donate to the 3CR Radiothon. 3CR is a Melbourne Community Radio station, but anyone can hear its programs via podcast. If you donate, please nominate 'Alternative News' as the show you support.

Dingo bytes

Israel and US-backed food distribution centres in Gaza are sites of "orchestrated killing and dehumanisation" that must be shut down, a medical NGO working on the ground has said.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has documented horrors witnessed at two of its clinics located near sites run by the so-called Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) in a new report. Testimonies and medical data point to "both targeted and indiscriminate violence" by Israeli forces and private US contractors at the sites.

Between 7 June and 24 July 2025 1,380 casualties, including 28 dead, were received at MSF's Al-Mawasi and Al-Attar clinics.

Seventy-one children were treated for gunshot wounds.

MSF general director Raquel Ayora said: "In MSF's nearly 54 years of operations, rarely have we seen such levels of systematic violence against unarmed civilians. The GHF distribution sites masquerading as 'aid' have morphed into a laboratory of cruelty."

Mohammed Riad Tabasi, a patient at the Al-Mawasi clinic, said: "We're being slaughtered. I've been injured maybe 10 times. I saw it with my own eyes, about 20 corpses around me. All of them shot in the head, in the stomach."

GHF replaced UN-coordinated aid delivery in May. Under the scheme, what had been 400 aid distribution points operating during the temporary ceasefire were reduced to just four.

All of these are in areas under full Israeli military control and "secured" by private US armed contractors. GHF announces when sites will be open for distributions on social media, which it often does in the middle of the night, with less than 30 minutes' notice.

Describing one journey, Omar, 23, said: "At around 3am, heavy gunfire started. "There was gunfire from the quadcopter, from the Apache helicopter, from tanks, from naval boats and from the soldiers themselves. There were a lot of injuries.

"A bullet struck my leg. At first, I thought my leg was gone. I was wearing jeans and a belt. I took off the belt and tied it around my leg. We remained trapped in the area until 5am.

"There were many young guys with me. One of them tried to get me out. He got shot in the head and died on my chest."

One medical co-ordinator said: "People are being shot like animals. They're not armed. They're not soldiers. They're civilians carrying plastic bags, hoping to bring home some flour or pasta."

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is Hungry Jacks. The Queensland government's yearly snapshot of tree cover data shows the sunshine state remains the deforestation capital of Australia, with agriculture again the biggest driver.

The latest SLATS (Statewide Landcover and Tree Study) shows an increase in the destruction of forest and woodland from August 2022 to August 2023, compared to the previous year, with 332,015 hectares of woody vegetation cleared.

The Australian Conservation Foundation's Nathaniel Pelle, noted: "Almost half of the bulldozing occurred in the Great Barrier Reef catchment area, which means it will be resulting in increased sediment and nutrient runoff that damages coral reefs.

"Around 86% of the clearing of habitat, for native animals like koalas, is to expand pasture for livestock and we know from previous analysis that the vast bulk of Queensland bulldozing is for beef," he said.

Major beef buyer Hungry Jack's, which also supplies Burger King restaurants globally with beef from Queensland, claims to be committed to eliminating deforestation from its supply chains, while McDonald's commitment will allow forest destruction until 2030.

"Fast food giants like Hungry Jack's, which demand cheap beef, share the substantial responsibility for this continued forest destruction", said Pelle. Deforestation for agriculture is expected to be a major topic at this year's climate conference to be hosted in Brazil.

Employers ‘off the hook’

Australian Unions are urging the Albanese government to reject key elements of the Productivity Commission’s newly released interim report ‘Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce,’ arguing it prioritises employer cost-cutting over effective solutions to address Australia’s skills and training challenges.

Unions oppose the report’s proposals to undermine essential safety and quality standards, claiming it dismisses the value these requirements provide to workers and the public, with its primary focus on reducing employer training costs.

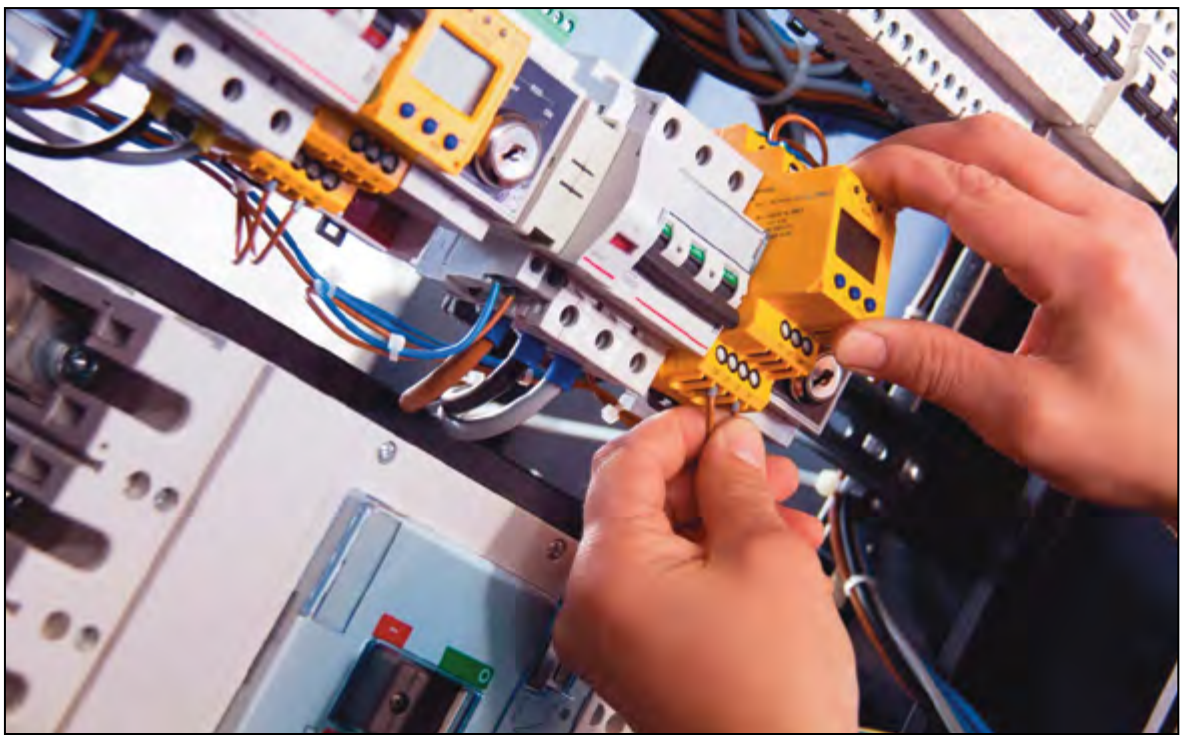
Unions warn that the Productivity Commission’s proposal to lower occupational entry requirements to address workforce shortages risks a ‘race to the bottom.’ These entry requirements represent the minimum level of skills and suitability to operate in that occupation.

The report’s recommendations do not address job quality issues in occupations experiencing a shortage. It also fails to recommend improving employer investment in training, and addressing the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships through pay increases and better support.

The report’s finding that there is little unmet demand for workplace training ignores the reality that employers have entirely ceased to provide effective onboarding training to new workers and no longer provide training to their own workforce when they want to introduce new technology or ways of working. Whilst the report recognises falling levels of investment in training and the greater need for a trained and skilled workforce in future, and the low overall rate of investment in Australia compared to other OECD nations, it fails to propose any meaningful solutions to lift training rates.

The Productivity Commission suggests the continued handover of taxpayer dollars to employers to do what they should be doing anyway – investing in their own workforce – a measure that has failed to arrest the decline in work-related training.

Australian Unions last week threw their support behind a national skills levy, a mechanism to ensure that employers contribute to the cost of training workers and boost productivity. Unions are proposing a revival of the National Training Guarantee by imposing a levy of 1.5 per cent of payroll for medium and large businesses with a turnover over $500,000 a year who fail to spend that amount on training for their own workforce each year. The last time a levy like this was imposed, expenditure on training by employers rose 18 per cent – despite the recession occurring at the same time.



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Unions also strongly oppose the expansion of non-apprentice pathways for apprenticeship-based occupations. Apprenticeships offer significant value to workers and employers and are the bare minimum requirement for workers to operate safely in those occupations. Non-apprentice pathways typically offer no job security for workers, require workers to meet the cost of their own education and often deliver a lower standard of training. The apprenticeship model has a long history of success in Australia and overseas, and issues with commencement and completion rates can be more effectively addressed via increases in apprentice pay and industry-based provision of apprentice support.

Australian Unions support the proposals around recognition of prior learning and streamlining the transfer of credits across Universities and TAFEs, but call for this process to include consultation with unions and employers.

ACTU Assistant Secretary, Liam O’Brien said, “Attacking occupational licensing and registration undermines worker and public safety. These minimum standards have been developed to ensure quality services and consumer protection and are often the driving force for productivity.

“The Productivity Commission’s suggestion of inferior pathways for apprenticeships will erode the successful model that so many trades rely on, exacerbating skills shortages in the future with workers developing narrower, less transferable skills.

O’Brien said that the Productivity Commission had severely misunderstood the reasons for a lack of investment in training by large employers. He said the Commission thought the answer is to provide small and medium businesses with a tax break, an idea he called “a missed opportunity.”

‘Bullying’ ‘threats’ at ANU under Bishop and Bell

Peter Farmer

A respected and high-profile academic at the Australian National University has given a graphic account of alleged mistreatment and bad governance at the university under Vice Chancellor Bell and Chancellor and former Liberal Party Foreign Minister Julie Bishop.

Dr Liz Allen, a demographer, told the Senate Education and Employment Education Committee that she had been bullied to the point of being “near suicide.” Allen said that it was only after Bishop became Chancellor that her union membership affiliation became “a source of differential treatment.”

Dr Allen was accused of leaking, at a time when, as widely reported, Vice Chancellor Bell told a leadership meeting that she would “hunt down” leakers. She claims Bishop “berated” her, as well as preventing her from leaving the room and laughing at her response.

Allen is usually part of what’s called ‘coordinated media’ during elections – a time when the university media staff organise all the academics who can comment on issues. She says she was excluded from that during the last election.

She also alleged that VC Bell had misled the Council on numerous occasions.

Allen also said that after much argument, ANU HR agreed to appoint an external investigator who stopped investigating on ethical grounds after ANU interference.

Allen described the trauma she felt as she was legally threatened and had publications delayed.

She says she has been warned that the VC’s publicity department is watching her public comments.

Allen quit her post on the council this year because she believed that press releases put out on behalf of the university’s council were “factually incorrect.”

Julie Bishop has denied engaging with council members, staff, and students “in any way other than with respect, courtesy, and civility.”

AI: call to ‘stop theft’

Workers from across Australia’s media, creative, and entertainment sectors are calling on the government to introduce regulation of Artificial Intelligence, amid widespread concerns about stolen work and future job losses.

A new survey by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance of more than 700 workers – including actors, crew members, musicians, and journalists – has revealed high levels of concern about AI, with 93% agreeing that greater government intervention was necessary to regulate AI.

The overwhelming majority of respondents – 94% – believe technology companies, such as Meta, Open AI, and Amazon, should be forced to pay for the work they steal to train their increasingly profitable AI models.

Equally concerning to workers is the lack of disclosure by AI developers around the practice, with more than half revealing that they did not know if their work had ever been used to train AI. Of those who reported that their image, work, or voice had been used to train AI, 78% neither consented nor received any compensation.

The survey’s release comes as AI is set to be a key focus of the federal Treasurer’s Economic Reform Roundtable, scheduled to be held in Canberra this month.

MEAA chief executive Erin Madeley said the survey findings highlighted serious, widespread concerns across the creative and media industries about the rapid rise of AI and its impact on day-to-day work, job security and future employment prospects, as well as the impact of the loss of human-led creativity for Australia’s unique culture.

“We know that Australian voices, music, and artwork have been scraped and faked, that ChatGPT is substituting the work of our journalists, and that AI-generated clone hosts have been used for radio programs – with no disclosure to audiences,” Madeley said.

“This amounts to the unsanctioned, unregulated, and untaxed mining of Australia’s creative resources.

MEAA

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Melbourne Recital Centre
6 September 2025

Don’t miss this celebration of Cuban music, with all its passion, heart and soul.

Cuban music is a world of rhythm, soul and innovation, shaped by iconic figures like Miguel Matamoros, Ernesto Lecuona, Compay Segundo, and other masters.

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Len Power

Saturday 06 September 2025 - 4:30pm

Saturday 06 September 2025 - 7:30pm

Duration: 1 hour 30 mins (no interval).

Public housing? Sure, if you're in the US military

Paul Gregoire

The South West Point and Baudin Point, the south-western end of Meandup-Garden Island, Western Australia.
Photo: Calistemon – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

From 2027, the US and the UK will be operating Submarine Rotational Force-West (SRF-West) out of HMAS Stirling on Meandup-Garden Island, off the coast of Fremantle on Noongar land in Western Australia. This is to be a permanent nuclear-powered submarine (SNN) force, involving four US SSN and one from the UK, and the Albanese government plans to build public housing for their personnel.

Introduced on 24 July 2025 and passing through the lower house on 30 July 2025, the Defence Housing Australia Amendment Bill 2025 seeks to expand the operations of state enterprise Defence Housing Australia (DHA), so that it can "provide housing for foreign exchange and visiting military personnel," as well as philanthropic organisations that provide support to ADF personnel.

The Albanese government notes that the provision of housing to foreign military personnel by the same entity that provides affordable housing to Australian Defence Force members is mainly necessitated by soon-to-be established of SRF-West although other joint defence initiatives involving the United States, as well as Japan and Singapore, have also been given as reasons for the change.

Having skipped through the lower house, the passage of the bill hit a speed bump in the Senate, when Greens Senator David Shoebridge rose to suggest an amendment but also took a moment to point out that the last term of parliament saw federal Labor unable to "build public housing" for the Australian people, but early in its next term, it's moving to build it for US soldiers instead.

The further kicker involved with this arrangement – if one considers that the government determining to provide public housing to US soldiers rather than Australian citizens was not enough – is that the US/UK joint SSN presence in the west will make the centrepiece of the AUKUS agreement, eight shiny Australian-owned SSN, much less necessary in terms of the rationale for AUKUS.

MAKING A SPLASH FOR UNCLE SAM

"You can't make some stuff up in politics, but what about this?" Shoebridge said, as he rose to move an amendment to the DHA Bill on Thursday, 31 July. "In the last parliament, we saw Labor coming up with a million reasons they couldn't do anything on public housing."

"Then, in this parliament, they start with a public housing bill," the Greens justice spokesperson elaborated. "Well done, Labor. You bring a public housing bill into the chamber. You push it through the lower house. And do you know what public housing they're building? They're building public housing for US troops under AUKUS. That's their public housing bill."

Shoebridge further pointed to the reports of late 2023, which outlined that 700 US military personnel and their families will be stationed in WA to operate the four US SSN to be stationed in the region, along with running a low-level radioactive waste dump planned for Meandup-Garden Island, which is progressing despite no consultation process with the Noongar people.

The Greens senator had attempted but failed to move an amendment that would have sent the bill to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee for inquiry. Despite the fact that federal Labor is planning on a public housing drive for noncitizens belonging to a friendly foreign military, the party has failed to consider the public taxpayer costings of this venture.

"Surely, they read this bill, didn't they?" Shoebridge mused. "Didn't somebody in the Labor caucus say, 'Our first public housing bill in the new parliament can't be to build housing for US troops under AUKUS? ... And do you know what? They can't even say how many hundreds of millions of public dollars will be used to build public housing for US troops under the bill."

THE GUTS OF THE LEGISLATION

"This bill recognises that the ADF, in modern times, relies on the support, services and cooperation of a wide range of external partners and organisations, including foreign militaries, who may require housing support in Australia," said defence personnel minister Matt Keogh, during his 24 July 2025 second reading speech on the bill.

"In particular, this bill will directly support our requirement to house personnel coming to Australia as part of Submarine Rotational Force-West under the Australia, United Kingdom and United States trilateral security partnership-AUKUS," he confirmed.

The Labor senator also told the chamber that 34 US military personnel will soon be arriving in WA for the commencement of SRF-West, and from then on, there will be "an increasing number of US and UK military, civilian and contractor personnel arriving in Western Australia over the course of five years, including some families accompanying United States military personnel."

The housing needs to be close by HMAS Stirling, and it is critical for the operation of the force. But the minister warned this housing should not be of detriment to the local public, and he added that using Defence Housing Australia is a good idea because it will ensure "adequate and suitable housing ... whilst limiting any negative impacts that may be had on local housing markets."

To facilitate these changes the legislation amends the Defence Housing Australia Act 1987 (Cth), so that its "provision of housing and housing-related services to" ADF personnel will be extended to "members of a military organisation of a foreign country," officials and employees of foreign governments and other entities that provide goods and services to the ADF.

CLAYTONS NUCLEAR-POWERED SUBS

Keogh also suggests that "SRF – West is integral to helping Australia and Australians develop the skills and infrastructure to safely and securely maintain, own and operate nuclear propelled submarines".

He's suggesting this at a time when doubts over whether any locally owned SSN will ever be produced are pervasive. The US government is conducting a review of whether the AUKUS deal is viable. While Britian and Australia pressed ahead with the signing of a 50-year-long AUKUS contract a fortnight ago, both the US and the UK can renege on the sub deal at any time at no cost to them.

While a report released last year by the US Congressional Research Service (CRS) suggests that in weighing up the "potential benefits, costs, and risks" of the AUKUS deal for the US, rather than attempt to produce an extra three to five Virginia class submarines to sell second hand to Australia commencing early next decade, it would be easier for the US to run more of its own subs out of WA.

The CRS report advises that the US has set itself the goal of producing a fleet of 66 Virginia class submarines, so it needs to be producing 2.3 of them a year in order for it to contemplate selling our nation at least three of Virginia class submarines in the 2030s. At the moment, the US production rate is at 1.3 submarines per year.

US undersecretary of defence policy Elbridge Colby is currently reviewing the AUKUS agreement on behalf of US president Donald Trump. If he decices that an alternative AUKUS Pillar I pathway, such as that recommended by the CRS, is the best route, then our government is simply pondering laws to provide housing to a permanent US submarine base to be established in the west.

"There are already two and a half thousand US marines cycling in and out of Darwin," Shoebridge added as the Senate was about to vote not to send the public housing bill to committee, as per his amendment. "Are we building housing for the two and a half thousand marines cycling in and out of Darwin?"

"There are already plans to put 700 US troops into the surrounds of Garden Island, off Fremantle, with all their families," the Greens senator said.

"How many houses are we building for US troops in Fremantle under this bill? There's already a housing crisis over there."

Sydney Criminal Lawyers

They're building public housing for US troops. That's their public housing.

Alliance to dismantle oil-gas rigs

Marcus Browning

A new analysis by an alliance of unions and leading environmental organisations has recommended a nation-first 'decommissioning hub' be built in Western Australia to manage the state's growing number of retired offshore oil and gas infrastructure.

The *WA Can't Wait* report, a collaboration between Greenpeace Australia Pacific, Unions WA, Conservation Council WA, Maritime Union of Australia - WA Branch, The Wilderness Society, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union - WA Branch, Electrical Trades Union - WA Branch, found that a WA decommissioning hub would deliver thousands of secure, skilled jobs, protect marine ecosystems and coastal communities, and direct scrap steel and other valuable resources into local domestic circular supply chains.

The report's recommendations include that:

- A decommissioning hub be built in Western Australia, near current fossil fuel infrastructure and where green recycling facilities can be established
- Oil and gas operators are held financially responsible and a fully industry-funded clean-up be mandated
- Existing laws are strengthened and enforced to ensure a full and timely decommissioning
- The safety of workers and the environment is prioritised
- Investment in ports, recycling facilities and local workforces is increased to support decommissioning and emerging offshore wind and other renewable energy industries.

Geoff Bice, Greenpeace Australia Pacific WA Campaign Lead, said:

"Our oceans are buckling under pressure from the fossil fuel industry, the drilling, extracting and burning of fossil fuels, and the mismanagement of oil and gas infrastructure. Spills and discarded toxic material have dire impacts on the ocean and all life that depends on it.

"89% of Australia's 5.7 million tonnes of offshore oil and gas infrastructure is in West Australian waters. The fossil fuel industry treats our oceans like a dump. WA's oceans can't become a graveyard for the rotting skeletons of the oil and gas industry.

"A decommissioning hub is WA-positive, and the industry should foot the bill for their own mess. This isn't just a clean-up plan, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a world-leading industry."

Rikki Hendon, UnionsWA Secretary, said:

"The oil and gas infrastructure off Western Australia's coastline must be decommissioned at the end of its life. That work needs to be done properly, safely, and locally.

"The opportunity to create thousands of secure jobs here in WA by putting in place a local decommissioning hub is right in front of us. We have the people, we have the industrial capacity, and we have the know-how."

Matt Roberts, Conservation Council of Western Australia Executive Director, said:

"50% of Australia's offshore oil and gas infrastructure is due to be decommissioned by 2030 and most of it is in WA. It is critical that companies are held to account to deliver on their environmental responsibilities.

"There are also huge opportunities for new jobs in decommissioning and metals recycling. These are the jobs of the future that will help us transition to renewable energy."

Will Tracey, Maritime Union of Australia WA Secretary, said:

"This report is a wake-up call. It shows that with the right coordination, WA can get the job done locally and safely – creating union jobs, protecting our pristine coast, and practicing responsible stewardship of hazardous waste. We welcome this practical, worker and community-focused contribution to solving a national decommissioning bottleneck. This is how we keep high value jobs in WA and secure economic strength for decades to come, building a bridge between the energy past and a just, sustainable future.

"While this report points the way forward, the federal government is doing the opposite – towing the Northern Endeavour and 40,000 tonnes of recyclable steel to Europe instead of backing local yards and local jobs. It's time for the government to act on what workers and communities are calling for: full removal, local recycling, and a Future Made in Australia that starts in WA."

Steve McCartney, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union WA Secretary, said:

"Western Australia has an opportunity to develop a circular economy in steel production, using the decommissioning of oil and gas infrastructure as a feedstock for green steel recycling onshore.

"Not only would this help stand up green steel projects in the South West, it would provide long-term and stable onshore demand so we never see another debacle like the Northern Endeavour work being stolen from Australian workers ever again."

Fern Cadman, Wilderness Society Fossil Fuel Industry Campaigner, said:

"Australia and WA are already behind the eight ball on decommissioning. The longer we wait, the harder the work is and the more the environment is at risk. We hope this report is a kick into gear for governments and industry.

"The magnificent oceans of WA mustn't become an industrial wasteland for the oil and gas sector. Cleaning up the legacy of the offshore oil and gas industry is a responsibility and an opportunity."

Adam Woodage, Electrical Trades Union WA Secretary, said:

"Decommissioning must be approached with the highest standards of safety and environmental responsibility. Cutting corners puts workers, communities and our fragile marine ecosystems at risk. The legacy we leave beneath the waves must reflect not just decades of extraction, but our commitment to doing the right thing when the work is done."

The report release follows recent revelations that Australian taxpayers are facing a $500 million clean-up bill for Chevron's aging oil and gas infrastructure in WA waters and that the safety regulator NOPSEMA has ordered Woodside to restart decommissioning work at several offshore oil and gas fields.

WA's oceans can't become a graveyard for the rotting skeletons of the oil and gas industry. Views from the Mullaloo Beach Lookout, Ocean Reef, Boorloo/Perth. Photo: metrotrekker.com (CC BY-SA 4.0)

GREEN NOTES

Is 1.5°C too high?

Extreme weather events are on the rise with no continent spared. Massive flooding, cyclones, out-of-control wildfires, drought, and extreme heat are taking a huge toll in human life, property, as well as causing the death of coral reefs, massive toxic algae blooms, and loss of biodiversity. These weather events are not natural, they are being driven by human-caused climate change. The burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas), and massive land clearance play a central role in the earth's warming.

The Paris climate conference (COP21) in 2015 agreed to hold "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and pursue efforts "to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels." Since then the focus has been on limiting warming to 1.5°C. In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's mid-range projection for warming to reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels was 2040.

Sir David King, the former UK Chief Scientist and advisor to British governments who initially adopted the 1.5°C target now says he was wrong. King said that US climate expert James Hansen – widely disbelieved at the time – was right in 1988, when he warned US Congress that we should not pass 350 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide (CO_2). We have now breached 415 ppm and are fast approaching 500 ppm, King said. "With over 40 billion tonnes released each year at present, the level of CO_2 in the atmosphere continues to rise – driving increasingly dangerous global warming," warns the World Meteorological Organization in its *Greenhouse Gas Bulletin*.

As recalcitrant governments, including Australia's, continue to approve massive expansions of fossil fuel production, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions will continue to rise. The long lifetime of carbon dioxide (CO_2) in the atmosphere locks in temperature increases for generations to come.

The NGO 350.org, was established in 2008, on the basis that to be safe, total emissions should be less than 350 ppm and warming less than 1°C, a position based on the work of former NASA climate chief James Hansen.

The past two years have broken all recorded temperatures. The increase in 2023 was 1.5°C and in 2024 reached 1.6°C. If that pattern continues and is not a random fluctuation, then to quote UN Secretary-General António Guterres, "the earth is on fire."

Many lines of evidence show that systems have/will have passed their tipping points at 1.5°C, including at both poles. Coral reef systems have been in a death spiral for more than a decade. Permafrost, boreal forests and the Amazon are becoming net carbon emitters. Eminent coral researcher, Australia's Charlie Veron, told the Royal Society in London in 2009 that a safe boundary for reef systems was 0.5°C. The evidence grows that the 1.5°C target was never a safe target for humanity.

Scientists say it is a big mistake to think we can "park" the Earth System at any given temperature rise – say 2°C – and expect it to stay there. The late Professor Will Steffen and his coauthors in their widely-read 2018 "Hothouse Earth" paper warned that "even if the Paris Accord target of a 1.5°C to 2°C rise in temperature is met, we cannot exclude the risk that a cascade of feedbacks could push the Earth System irreversibly onto a 'Hothouse Earth' pathway."

"The evidence grows that the 1.5°C target was never a safe target for humanity … So it cannot be an advocacy endpoint either, from a 'science-based' perspective," warns climate policy advocate scientist David Spratt.

This doesn't mean it's too late. It means action is needed now.

Queensland: historic teachers' strike

Graham Holton and Marcus Browning

After an overwhelming vote in favour during the union ballot over 36,000 Queensland public school teachers undertook a 24-hour protected strike at 1,266 Queensland state schools on 6 August 2025. This is the first teachers strike in sixteen years, and the largest in the union's history. More than 50,000 QTU members took strike action without pay. The action by the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) addresses issues of low pay, escalating workloads, staff shortages, concerns about classroom safety, and overall unacceptable working conditions.

QTU President Cresta Richardson says that despite months of promising meetings, the government chose to make an offer that will place Queensland public school teachers at the bottom end of the Australian pay scale in three years: "We can't let more teachers and school leaders walk out the door. We have to attract and retain our educators. Today is a day to remind everyone how important our state schools are."

The historic strike highlights the deep-rooted issues in the public education sector, with teacher burnout, poor attrition rates, unsafe class room conditions, and the general frustration of being undervalued by the Qld government. QTU President, Cresta Richardson, said if educators accepted the state government's wage offer, they would be "the lowest paid in the country" and would place "our members in a pretty dire situation."

The day of action that led to the strike followed two offers from the government that were subsequently rejected. "We've experienced overwhelming support from the Queensland community, which is really appreciated. Most importantly, we've seen a clear understanding of the issues that are driving this action," Richardson said. Although the largest cohort gathered in Brisbane, members met in their communities around the state to ensure every state school was represented and felt included.

Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations, Jarrod Bleijie claimed the public service pay agreements are in line with the government's central wages policy which includes CPI-linked increases for workers from 1 July 2025. Bleijie said that the Crisafulli government was "committed to being an employer of choice." After two inadquate offers, teachers are having none of it.

QTU General Secretary Kate Ruttiman noted that QTU members send their own children to state schools. "All Queensland children and their families deserve access to quality, free public education, and our members deserve respect and a living salary for providing it."

"We'll see that long overdue federal funding coming into our state schools shortly, money and resources our schools have gone without for too long. The federal government's done its job, now it's time for the Crisafulli government to ensure we have the staff needed in classrooms," Cresta Richardson said.

Photo: QTU facebook

... the first teachers strike in sixteen years, the largest in the union's history

Data-mining the Global South into submission

From the shantytowns of Nairobi to the barrios of Manila, smartphones hum with the raw material of the 21st century: data, all sorts of data. And just like spices and slaves once sailed westward in imperial galleons, metadata now travels quietly to the cloud servers of Palo Alto and Shenzhen. This isn't development, it is digital extraction. Welcome to the age of AI colonialism.

Big Tech firms have turned the Global South into a massive open-pit mine for behavioral data. Under the pretence of "AI for Development," they build infrastructure, donate connectivity, and sponsor pilot programs but the returns flow in only one direction. Voice samples collected in Ghana become training fodder for Western voice assistants. Facial data gathered in Nigerian policing trials ends up fine-tuning surveillance software in San Francisco, where western models have had protracted problems in identifying and tracking darker-skinned individuals. Agricultural data scraped from Filipino farmers help power predictive analytics for agribusiness conglomerates that will hardly benefit the Philippines.

This is not a partnership. This is colonial pillage dressed in TED Talk lingo.

THE MYTH OF THE AI EQUALISER

AI is marketed as a miracle equalizer that will help developing nations leapfrog into the future. We were told AI would bring precision agriculture, predictive healthcare, and smart urbanism, among numerous other utopian transformations, to even the most under-resourced regions. These Davos fantasies were regurgitated for nearly two decades. But where is the proof, the showcase project or evidence that even a fraction of those promises was delivered?

The only real revolution happening is the outflow of data to power these breakthroughs. Big Tech servers abroad now function like the colonial warehouses and banks of yore. Nor are intellectual properties of individuals and SMEs in the Developing World safe from this new brand of predation. Models, patents, ideas, and profits quietly migrate north while the Global South is left with nothing but pilot programs and PowerPoint decks.

Worse still, these tools are increasingly used against the very populations providing the raw material, and/or raw data. In Kenya, facial recognition technology was introduced as a policing tool under the guise of modernisation. In practice, it has disproportionately targeted political activists who, in turn, are also resorting to AI to level the political battlefield.

In India, AI-driven fraud detection systems have misclassified thousands of rural poor, unjustly cutting them off from vital government benefits. Imported algorithmic governance – often designed without regard for local context or cultural nuance – compounds the problem. Ironically, while these systems penalise the most vulnerable, India has emerged as a global hub for sophisticated online scams. The poor are relentlessly surveilled, while the real fraudsters flourish with impunity.

THE BIOMETRIC GOLD RUSH

Nothing exemplifies AI colonialism better than the biometric boom. Tech firms, often in partnership with NGOs or global financial institutions, are racing to digitise identities across the Global South. Fingerprint scans, iris recognition, and voiceprint registration have all been justified as ways to "include the unbanked" or "streamline public services."

These efforts rarely include meaningful consent or data protection frameworks. In many cases, biometric systems have been imposed without community consultation or independent oversight.

One of the most egregious examples is Worldcoin, a cryptocurrency project that offered small payments in exchange for biometric iris scans. Its largest user base? Young people in low-income African nations like Kenya who served as a convenient population to experiment on, far from the regulatory spotlights of Brussels or Washington. (Worldcoin was co-founded by Sam Altman, who is also the co-founder and CEO of OpenAI, which owns ChatGPT).

Once collected, this data becomes part of opaque and often proprietary AI systems whose inner workings are unknowable to the very people they affect. Local regulators are usually outgunned, underfunded or more likely, politically compromised. As a result, entire populations are subjected to surveillance and scoring regimes that they neither understand nor control.

The worst culprits in this saga are not Big Tech but local politicians and technocrats who sell out their nations at bargain basement prices, couched under the double-speak of 'best practice' and UN institutional recommendations.

RESISTANCE AND RECLAMATION

But is the tide turning? Nigeria has put the brakes on foreign-backed digital ID programs. Kenya has suspended iris-scanning initiatives after massive backlash. A growing chorus of activists, lawyers, and technologists are calling for data sovereignty: the idea that countries should have the same rights over their data that they claim over oil, water, and land.

A few pioneering efforts have emerged. In Brazil, the General Data Protection Law has begun to shape public discourse. In South Africa, local AI research groups are working on open, transparent models rooted in African languages and cultural norms. The African Union has even begun early-stage deliberations on a continental data governance framework.

It is an uphill fight.

Western governments, in tandem with corporate lobbyists, continue to push for "data liberalisation" which is nothing but a euphemism for open access-mediated exploitation.

Aid packages, development grants, and tech investments are increasingly tied to these demands. It echoes the structural adjustment programs of the 1980s, where loans came with strings attached. Now, the strings are coded in algorithms.

THE NEED FOR A NEW DIGITAL NON-ALIGNMENT

The Global South needs a coordinated pushback against Silicon Valley's digital hegemony. This would involve not just resisting predatory data practices but investment in alternative infrastructures such as sovereign cloud storage, ethical AI standards, community-owned data cooperatives, and open-source platforms. This is how a new digital non-alignment paradigm can be achieved.

The Global South has been colonised before. Data, unlike oil or sugar, is invisible, infinitely replicable, and easily stolen. That makes the fight harder but also more urgent. In this new age of algorithmic empires, control over information isn't just about profit, it is about power, freedom, and the right to define your own future.

RT.com

Class and freedom

Marcus Browning

One time someone sent me – as a correspondent for the *Guardian* – a series of questions to do with Communist attitudes to individual freedom. How did we feel about copyright law and "the antiquated speed limits on our roads," they wanted to know. What was our attitude towards random breath-testing of motorists or compulsory wearing of helmets by cyclists?

Clearly the attempt by governments to use the state to prevent protesters in support of the Palestinians from marching in the streets is an example of attack on their democratic freedom to dissent and solidarity.

Contrary to what the mass media usually say, Communists firmly believe in freedom of the individual. We believe that only socialism provides the means for the individual to be truly free. We also recognise that individuals are part of society, and that society has responsibilities and rights just as individuals do.

Individuals are free to act as they please, so long as their actions do not impact adversely on the rights of other members of society. Free speech for example, does not mean that you can say anything you like about other people; there is no such thing in our view as freedom to libel or freedom to slander. Similarly, we believe that promoting racial or religious hatred is unacceptable.

One question sought our views on the matter of copyright and intellectual property laws. In response I would say that Communists do not believe that ideas and discoveries that help to advance the human condition should be treated as commodities. It is capitalism's approach to everything to treat it as a commodity and see if you can sell it for profit.

We believe that art and culture, for example, should be nurtured and encouraged through community recognition and support, not by consigning them to the vagaries of fashion and the market. The inventor of a new system of software, say, should be rewarded by society through grants and prizes commensurate with the importance and value of the new system to society, not by making the inventor a multi-billionaire.

If it is of benefit to society, then society should be able to benefit from it. At the same time, the person who devised the system or whatever it is, should be suitably rewarded.

Also raised was whether we favoured compulsory or non-compulsory voting. This cry is raised by conservative interests on a regular basis, because experience in other countries clearly shows that optional voting markedly favours conservative parties and candidates.

In the conditions of bourgeois democracy that presently prevail in Australia, compulsory voting may cause some people to grumble and to vote meaninglessly, but it produces a far more accurate democratic outcome than the alternative.

We would prefer to see a system of participatory democracy with candidates nominated and openly discussed by the colleagues in their workplace, or the neighbours in their housing estate, or other community institutions. We would like people to have the right to recall their elected representatives if a majority feel that the candidate has forfeited their support (by ignoring their campaign promises, for example).

Xiaomeisha beach, Shenzhen, China. Photo: Farrukh – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Capitalist society is made up of classes who look out for their own interests. We believe that the interests of the working class, working farmers, and the proprietors of small businesses, have to be paramount, for these are the people who create the wealth in society and do not exploit the labour of others.

Laws and regulations that enhance the interests of ordinary working people will always have our support; those that do not do that will not have our support.

Freedom for the capitalist class is defined by the crises of over-production and increasing exploitation of labour that are fundamental to capitalism. These crises are interwoven with and exacerbate capitalism's main contradiction, that between social production and private appropriation of the socially produced wealth.

In the last decades capitalism has undergone major developments which have allowed the crisis in the financial system to the crisis of over-production is an extremely destructive way.

Economies have been deregulated as conservative governments in the USA and other capitalist countries, including Australia, bowed to the demands of the transnational corporations.

Public enterprises were privatised, many government-run services were contracted out, barriers to investment were removed giving capital free movement globally to seek low-wage, non-unionised labour to exploit.

Under the banner of lower inflation, unions were attacked, wages and working conditions were cut or kept down. Government roles and functions in economies were greatly reduced. Markets – i.e. huge corporations – reign supreme. Trillions of dollars are wasted on preparations for war and war itself. Where is the freedom of the individual in all this?

As a Turkish communist poet put it, this is a sad freedom. ✪

Engels at 130

Zdzislaw Z

We remember the legendary Friedrich Engels on the 130th anniversary of his passing (5 August 1895). Engel's life works gave us the tools to understand and challenge the exploitation of the capitalist class. The world still grapples with economic crises and class struggle witten over 150 years ago. His words continue to shed a light on the world through a materialist lens, wherever workers organise, gender oppression runs rife, or captialism runs roughshod over nature.

The partnership between Marx and Engels began in 1844 in a cafe in Paris. Over four decades, their relationship evolved from initial philosophical alignment to a profound working bond that survived political exile, crushing poverty, and the relentless pressures of revolutionary work. This collaboration stands as one of history's most important and transformative collaborations. While Marx often overshadows Engels in socialist theory by providing the theoretical foundation, Engels served as both the populariser and the practical strategist, grounding these theories in reality. Engels' sharp critiques of capitalism and visionary ideas continue to influence movements fighting inequality today.

Engels played a crucial role in the development of both what we would now call dialectical materialism & historical materialism. Quite simply, without him, Marxism in the way it has been seen throughout the 20th and 21st centuries would not exist .

Engels both finished and edited *Das Kapital* after Marx's death. Engels' work remains vital for analysing capitalism and fighting for a socialist future. His dedication to workers' liberation continues to inspire movements worldwide. Lenin – heavily inspired by works such as 'Anti-Dühring' and the 'Dialectics of Nature' was able to further both Marx's and Engels' writing leading to the ability to carry out the Bolshevik revolution.

Engels' radicalisation did not emerge from theory, but from the realities of industrial England. At 22 he was sent to Manchester to work at his father's textile firm. There he saw first-hand what he would later write about in *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, a work that still resonates today in analyses of conditions of 'gig workers.' In this workplace he witnessed workers some as young as six working 16-hour days. Engels noted missing fingers from unguarded machinery, workers coughing themselves to death by 40 from cotton dust, and families crammed into small rooms with sewerage seeping through the floors.

Witnessing the Irish Famine further cemented his understanding of capitalism's brutal paradoxes of how it could produce starvation amidst abundance. Even his military service later informed his strategic thinking about revolutionary organising.

Engels' 1884 work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* revolutionised how we understand and fight against gender oppression by tracing its roots to the rise of class society. He analysed how capitalism transforms marriage into an economic contract and relegated women's unpaid domestic labor to the shadows of "a natural" duty.

As workers today battle union-busting algorithms, climate injustice, and the compounding crises of capitalism, Engels' method remains indispensable. His greatest lesson endures – that istory is made through collective class struggle. While these conflicts have changed in their nature over time, the necessity of his insights has not. Early 20th-century strikers relied on Engels' texts, which exposed the brutality of industrial capitalism and helped win child labor laws and the eight-hour workday.

Today, unions still draw from foundational works like *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, while his analysis of exploitation echoes in the strikes of gig workers and beyond. Engels didn't just describe exploitation, he gave workers the tools to fight it. Engels also cast an eye over the history of socialism in the short, but deep work *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, well worth reading since the utopians are still very much with us.

On this anniversary, we do not merely remember Engels. We continue the unfinished revolution he helped to define. ✪

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
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Duplicitous and out of touch

I am appalled at the Prime Minister's speech at GARMA 2025. $70 million for clean energy projects. I heard nothing to address the Gaps in health, education, and housing. Clean energy sounds great, unless of course you do not have access to decent housing, Aboriginal-run health services or quality education.

Listening to commentaries by Indigenous participants in GARMA, he failed dismally to pull the wool over their eyes. No wonder he failed to receive a positive reception. As desirable as clean energy is, it is not the pressing priority of Indigenous communities whose basic needs are not being met.

Nor did the PM offer any solutions to rising deaths in custody and incarceration of Indigenous youth.

Albanese's one achievement was to show how out of touch he is.

And, to change the subject, he was caught on the back foot, once again out of touch with the Australian people, when an estimated 300,000 people marched on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Once again he thought he could buy off those who have protested so strongly against genocide.

The strength of the opposition to genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians was such that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese could no longer ignore it.

He cynically acknowledged the democratic rights of people to protest and said he would arrange a phone call to Israeli PM Bejamin Netanyahu raising his concerns. But was unable to mention the word "genocide," for fear of upsetting his masters in Washington.

This attempt to buy support was for $20 million in food and medical aid – a drop in the ocean that is unlikely to receive starving children, women, and men in Gaza.

The $20 million is disingenuous from a government that recently donated $900 million to Elbit, the Israeli weapons company. It is the height of hypocrisy.

Wake up Albo!

J J Scott

Solutions to Crossword

***Guardian* 11 August 2025 #2157**

Across

1. **Kyoto** – Japanese city, original target of atomic attack
6. **Black Rain** – A toxic precipitation caused by nuclear attack
7. **Sadako Sasaki** – A young girl victim of radiation-related cancer, inspired the paper crane movement
9. **Enola Gay** – Nickname of aeroplane that dropped the first atomic weapon in warfare
10. **A-Bomb Dome** – Partially ruined building, now a memorial to the first atomic strike

Down

2. **Truman** – US President who ordered the war crimes to be committed
3. **Hibakusha** – Japanese term for survivors of the atomic bombings
4. **Human Shadow** – Famous exhibition, showing what little remains of a person vaporised by a nuclear weapon
5. **Fat man** – Name of nuclear bomb dropped on Nagasaki
8. **Silence** – A solemn period observed at 8:15 AM on 6 August

Worth Reading: One more time for the road

We asked comrades to tell us about a book they'd like to read again

***Utz* by Bruce Chatwin**
Graham Holton, *contributor*

Bruce Chatwin's novella *Utz*, is set in socialist Prague. The Czech art collector, Kaspar Utz, amasses an extraordinary private collection of Meissen porcelain figures, fed by an obsession that takes over his life. He lives in run down accommodation to preserve the one thing he loves. Chatwin examines the psychopathology of the compulsive collector revealing what drove the man. I've read this three times and find it fascinating each time.

***Catch-22*, Joseph Heller**
Peter Farmer, *contributor*

It's mainly famous as a funny book for pissed-off US servicepeople, but there's so much more to this rambling novel. In one way, it's an Alice in Wonderland for adults, full of funny paradoxes as well as Catch-22 itself, now part of the language. In the character of Milo Minderbinder, bumptious US capitalism is laid bare and made horribly funny. I want to read it again to enjoy the jokes again, and see if there's anything I missed the first time around.

***The Will of the Many*, James Islington**
Lauren Trumble, *Melbourne Comrade*

The Will of the Many is a Greek-inspired epic fantasy with a fascinating magic system that explores government secret-keeping, power, oppression and the fight against a controlling system. This book has so much mystery and intrigue, it has me constantly unsure of who to trust, with no idea where the story will take me next. It's been a couple of years since I first read it and I want to re-read it to prepare for the release of the second book in the trilogy

***Thursday Murder Club*, Richard Osman**
Clare Marino, *Half the Sky contributor*

Set in an old folks home, this well-written and agreeably complex whodunnit rebuts ageism by showing a group of clever old people succeeding largely by playing on popular misunderstandings of the elderly. There's a retired union leader who's still got fire in the belly, a retired spy who's still devious – something for everyone. I'd like to read it again because it's the perfect mix of complexity, humour, and interest.

Australian Landfall, Egon Kisch
M Santos, *contributor*

Not a geography book! Kisch was a Czechoslovak writer who visited Australia to attend the All-Australian Congress Against War and Fascism. Refused entry, he literally jumped ship, breaking his leg. Why I want to read the book again? It's bracing to read in detail how far a right-wing Australian government would go to try to silence a communist, and Kisch's warnings about fascism and concentration camps in 1935 are very relevant to the world situation today.

***An Economic History of The USSR* by Alec Nove**
Jay, *Melbourne Comrade*

By no means a Marxist-Leninist friendly resource, but it's one of the most comprehensive timelines of the economic policies and material conditions faced by the Soviets from 1917 onwards. Why I'd like to read it again: this book is a good back-up to other, more sympathetic accounts of the USSR, its problems and achievments.

Book Review

Heart Lamp and the Rebellion of the Unseen

by Banu Mushtaq

Reviewer: Jenny Farrell

When Banu Mushtaq's *Heart Lamp* became the first Kannada work – and first short story collection – to win the 2025 International Booker Prize, it marked a pivotal recognition of regional Indian literature and brought overdue attention to the voices of Muslim women in rural Karnataka.

Translated by Deepa Bhasthi, who retains the cultural texture and linguistic richness of the original, *Heart Lamp* is a radical act of witnessing. Across twelve stories spanning three decades, Mushtaq reveals systemic oppression while offering her characters – mostly Muslim women – a language of resistance.

A major voice in Karnataka's Bandaya Sahitya (Rebel Literature) movement, Mushtaq confronts caste, class, gender, and religious oppression. She speaks out against triple talaq (a now-banned instant divorce practice) and hijab bans that restrict Muslim girls' education, while also critiquing conservative patriarchy within Muslim communities. Her work bridges Bandaya's class-caste rebellion with Islamic feminism, exposing how Hindu nationalist policies and patriarchal religious practices together suppress women's autonomy. By collaborating with Dalit-Bahujan groups and Muslim women's collectives, Mushtaq expands the scope of Rebel Literature to resist both Islamophobia and internal injustice.

Mushtaq's stories are grounded in her identity as a Muslim woman rooted in faith but critical of its misuses. Her political and literary voice was shaped in the 1970s Bandaya movement, which rejected elite literary norms in favour of protest-driven narratives from the margins. Her focus, however, remains distinct: the intersecting constraints faced by Muslim women due to class, caste, gender, and dogma.

Her stories reveal how patriarchy operates through the fusion of religion and state power. Hindu women contend with caste-bound honour systems, while Muslim women face erasure enforced by groups like the Tablighi Jamaat and mosque mutawallis, clerics who manipulate scripture to maintain control. In Black Cobras, women denied justice by a hypocritical mutawalli curse him with symbolic venom; his wife eventually rebels, briefly but powerfully revealing the vulnerability of patriarchal authority. Mushtaq's realism resists fantasy: the women don't overturn the system, but their resistance lingers like a cobra's venom: ultimately deadly.

Her critique, however, extends beyond India. While she denounces Indian patriarchy, she never romanticises Western ideals. In The Shroud, a wealthy woman on hajj forgets to buy a burial shroud for a poor widow who entrusted her with money. In another story, a high-heeled shoe is unbearably tight on a pregnant woman, symbolising the discomfort of imposed modernity. In A Taste of Heaven, Pepsi Cola is used to deceive an elderly woman into believing it's the drink of paradise. For Mushtaq, liberation must be grounded in lived reality, not in regressive tradition nor shallow Western mimicry.

Economic dependency is another prison. Many women in *Heart Lamp* are at the mercy of their husbands for survival. A second wife becomes an existential threat in more than one story. Class is a constant undertone. Mushtaq critiques not just personal failings but a system in which the wealthy perform piety while neglecting the material needs of the poor. In Red Lungis, a wealthy Muslima organises a mass circumcision, other stories mock the hypocrisy of the well-to-do with biting irony.

Morning Star (edited for space)

DPRK National Liberation Day and more

Graham Holton

Upcoming historic anniversaries are very important to the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and its people. On 15 August the DPRK celebrates its 80th National Liberation Day (*Jogukhaebangui Nal*), marking Korea's liberation from Imperial Japanese rule in 1945. It is celebrated with mass dances, cultural events, park gatherings, and sometimes military parades. This is the country's biggest national holiday as it commemorates the end of 35 years of Imperial Japan's brutal colonial rule.

25 August, the Day of Songun, is a state holiday that commemorates the leadership of the former leader, Kim Jong Il, of the revolutionary armed forces. In 1960 Kim Jong Il began his leadership of the Korean People's Army, which the DPRK government regards as the 'start of the Songun revolutionary leadership.' The day is observed with flag displays, concerts, dancing parties, and visits to historic sites. The Day of Songun was promoted under Kim Jong Un to reinforce continuity and legitimacy in military leadership.

10 October marks the 80th Anniversary of the Founding of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), which boasts a long history of socialism. The WPK has made great contributions to global independence, and is regarded as a beacon of hope amongst the world's progressive peoples. There will be a month of celebration from 15 August to 10 October during which the DPRK says celebrations will be on a "world-wide scale."

An important event last month was 27 July, which marks the anniversary of the signing of the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War. There was a nationwide homage to war veterans and military honour guards, marked by State ceremonies at the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Memorial in Pyongyang.

On 11 July the DPRK celebrated the important 64th anniversary of its Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with China. This was marked with diplomatic receptions at the Chinese embassy in Pyongyang, attended by senior DPRK officials. On 11 July 1961, Premier Zhou Enlai and Prime Minister Kim Il Sung jointly signed the Sino-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Beijing. This important document laid the political and legal foundation for the development of friendship and cooperative relations between the two socialist countries and embodies their common desire for regional peace. *Xinhua News Agency* has reported that the treaty embodies "the friendship the two peoples built with their blood in the process of resisting foreign aggression and striving for national independence and liberation and lays a solid legal and political foundation for the long-term development of bilateral relations."

Dancers celebrate DPRK–China friendship. Photo: Roman Harak – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

11 July marks the signing of the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War

UK: Musk amplifies hatred and falsehoods

Social media platform X, formerly Twitter, played a central role in the spread of false narratives and harmful content which contributed to racist violence against Muslim and migrant communities in the UK, following the tragic murder of three young girls in the town of Southport, Amnesty International has established in a technical explainer.

A technical analysis of X's open-source code (or publicly available software) reveals that its recommender system (or content-ranking algorithms), which drives the "For You" page, systematically prioritises content that sparks outrage, provokes heated exchanges, reactions and engagement, without adequate safeguards to prevent or mitigate harm.

On 29 July 2024, three young girls – Alice da Silva Aguiar, Bebe King, and Elsie Dot Stancombe – were murdered, and 10 others injured, by 17-year-old Axel Rudakubana. Within hours of the attack, misinformation and falsehoods about the perpetrator's identity, religion, and immigration status flooded social media platforms, and were prominent on X.

Amnesty International's analysis of X's open-source recommender algorithm uncovered systemic design choices that favour contentious engagement over safety.

X's algorithmic ranking system, revealed in X's own source code reveals that falsehoods, irrespective of their harmfulness, may be prioritised and surface more quickly in timelines than verified information. X's "heavy ranker" model – the machine-learning system that decides which posts get promoted – prioritises "conversation" – regardless of the nature of the content. As long as a post drives engagement, the algorithm appears to have no mechanism for assessing the potential for causing harm – at least not until enough users themselves report it. These design features provided fertile ground for inflammatory racist narratives to thrive on X in the wake of the Southport attack.

Further analysis of the system also uncovered built-in amplification biases favouring "Premium" (formerly Blue) verified subscribers whose posts are automatically promoted over those of ordinary users. Before official accounts were shared by authorities, false statements and Islamophobic narratives about the incident began circulating on social media. Hashtags such as #Stabbing and #EnoughisEnough were also used to spread claims falsely suggesting the attacker was a Muslim and/or an asylum-seeker.

An account on X called "Europe Invasion," known to publish anti-immigrant and Islamophobic content, posted shortly after news emerged that the suspect was "alleged to be a Muslim immigrant." That post garnered over four million views. Within 24 hours, all X posts speculating that the perpetrator was Muslim, a refugee, a foreign national, or arrived by boat, were tracked to have an estimated 27 million impressions.

The Southport tragedy occurred in the context of major policy and personnel changes at X. Since Elon Musk's takeover in late 2022, X has laid off content moderation staff, reinstated previously banned accounts, disbanded Twitter's Trust and Safety advisory council, fired trust and safety engineers and restored numerous accounts which had been previously banned for hate or harassment, including that of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, a far-right activist also known as Tommy Robinson.

INFLAMMATORY POSTS

Yaxley-Lennon told his 840,000 X followers that there was "more evidence to suggest Islam is a mental health issue rather than a religion of peace," further stoking hostility against Muslims.

X's owner Elon Musk – who has 140 million followers on his personal account – also notably amplified the false narratives that were exchanged regarding the Southport attack. On 5 August 2024, as the riots were spreading, he commented on a video posted by Ashley St Clair, saying "civil war is inevitable."

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer intervened, calling for the protection of Muslims amid waves of targeted attacks by mobs on mosques, refugee shelters and Asian, Black and Muslim communities.

In response, Elon Musk publicly retorted: "Shouldn't you be concerned about attacks on *all* communities?"

Amnesty International's analysis shows that in the two weeks following the Southport attack, Yaxley-Lennon's posts on X received over 580 million views – an unprecedented reach for a figure banned on most mainstream platforms for breaching hate speech rules.

TIME FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Amnesty International's analysis of X's design and policy choices raises serious concerns about how the platform's recommender system functions in crisis situations. The way the system weighs, ranks, and boosts content, particularly posts that generate heated replies or are shared or created by "blue" or "premium" accounts, can result in harmful material being shared with larger audiences.

Where such content targets racial, religious, and other marginalised groups, this can create serious human rights risks for members of these groups. X's failure to prevent or adequately mitigate these foreseeable risks constitutes a failure to respect human rights.

Whilst regulatory frameworks such as the UK's Online Safety Act (OSA) and the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) now establish legal obligations for platforms to assess and mitigate some systemic risks, these obligations must be robustly enforced to have any effect. X's design choices and opaque practices continue to pose human rights risks that demand greater accountability, not just scrutiny.

Amnesty is calling for effective regulatory enforcement and robust accountability measures to address the systemic harms created by X's design choices. The UK government should also address remaining gaps in the current online safety regime to hold platforms like X accountable for broader harms caused by their algorithms.

Morning Star (edited for space)

Abu Dhabi: built on the blood of Sudan

Maximus M

The civil war in Sudan continues to spiral into severe crisis. 24.6 million people in Sudan face acute hunger. 13 million people are displaced. However it's to the advantage of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), whose capital city, Abu Dhabi is built off the blood and exploitation of the Sudan.

The origins of the Sudanese Civil War can be traced back to 2019 when the former Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, was overthrown in a coup ending his nearly three-decade rule. The coup resulted in a short-lived joint military-civilian government that then was overthrown in another coup in October 2021. That coup was spearheaded by two main factions the Sudanese Armed Forces and the paramilitary group known as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). There were strong disagreements between the two factions on what direction the country was heading. This tension and disagreement led to violent break-up between the Sudanese Armed Forces and RSF, leading to the Sudanese Civil War in April 2023.

The UAE is playing a crucial role in Sudanese politics that dates back to the 1970s. The UAE has huge investments in both agricultural, and gold reserves within Sudan while controlling important infrastructure hubs and ports.

The UAE's largest monopolies have invested heavily in agriculture owning more than 50,000 farmable hectares and additional 162,000 hectares of cultivated land. Leading up to the Sudanese Civil War, the Emirates have attempted multiple times to close agriculutral agreements, all of which were rejected by the Sudanese government due to unfair terms. Meanwhile the UAE has played a key role in the Sudanese gold industry ever since the 2010s, importing $3.5 billion (AUD) worth in 2022 alone. However since the Civil War, the UAE has been able to smuggle vast amounts of gold through neighbouring countries with the help of its ally, the RSF. This has resulted in a massive extraction of gold, with an estimated $20.5 billion being smuggled out the country.

The RSF – known for a lack of regard for human rights – has been quick to become an important ally and proxy for the UAE. The RSF has been willing to do the bidding of Abu Dhabi when it comes to extracting agriculture lands and expanding gold smuggling.

The RSF is being pushed back by the Sudanese Armed Forces with a recent defeat in the capital city of Khartoum. It has retreated into the gold-rich Darfur region and surrounding western areas of the country, hoping to create a stronghold within the region, in order to continue gold smuggling to the UAE.

Photo: United Nations Photo – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

The brutal exploitation of the Sudanese population is devastating, with both sides of the conflict accused of war crimes throughout the civil war. The Rapid Support Forces has been the worst offender, and is currently causing mass starvation among civilians in the besieged city of al-Fashir. The RSF are attacking refugee camps and hospitals, particularly within the Darfur region, and targeting non-Muslim communities, mirroring the Darfur genocide of the early 2000s. The war has resulted in 8.1 million people facing phase 4 (emergency) while already 638,000 people are facing phase 5 (catastrophic) levels of famine.

All of this couldn't be done without the backing of a foreign power such as the United Arab Emirates. They have provided weapons and other forms of support, including, apparently, funding Colombian mercenaries, and profiting from arms supplies as well as gold and agriculture.

Making Erhai Lake bloom again

A story of China's ecological transformation

Tings Chak

On a clear morning in June 2023, I arrived in the city of Dali, located in China's southwestern province of Yunnan, and was received by He Licheng, a local resident and farmer from nearby Gusheng Village. Like others older people there, He recalled how the pristine Erhai Lake of his childhood in the 1970s and 1980s had become so heavily polluted by the 1990s and 2000s that its signature three-petal flowers, known locally as haicaihua (Ottelia acuminata), had stopped blooming. Because the plant is extremely sensitive to pollution, its presence or absence is considered a biological indicator of water quality in the region.

Due to a combination of factors in the 'reform and opening up' period – including economic development, the rise of pesticide and fertiliser use with the 'Green Revolution,' population growth, and increased tourism and migration – water quality within the Erhai basin steadily deteriorated. A decade ago, in 2013, Erhai Lake was experiencing large-scale outbreaks of blue-green algae, with the water quality unsuitable for human contact.

Already in the late 1990s, problems such as algal blooms were becoming apparent, necessitating the first measures like prohibiting motorised fishing boats and nets and the banning of phosphorous-containing detergents. However, these measures could not keep up with the pace of pollution and led to an economic downturn as well.

In the early 2000s, Pan Yue took office as the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Environmental Protection – currently, he is the head of the National Ethnic Affairs Commission. As one of the youngest vice ministers ever, Pan transformed the country's approach to environmental impact assessment, halting some of the largest projects totalling 112 billion yuan in investments and placing huge fines on violators. In a 2007 speech to a group of young students, he said that 'environmental pollution has severely constrained economic growth' and that 'social injustice leads to environmental injustice, which in turn exacerbates social injustice.' Pan saw the protection of the environment as being essential to – not at odds with – China's economic growth.

It was during that time that Professor Kong Hainan, upon returning from his studies in Japan, led a team from Shanghai Jiao Tong University to study the polluted Erhai Lake. The findings and reports they filed led to the State Council approving a national water pollution control and treatment project in 2006. Erhai Lake became a key testing ground for Kong's team, which discovered the most significant source of pollution to be the cultivation of a local type of garlic on the shores of the lake.

When the local government began to restrict these activities to areas beyond 200 metres from the shoreline, farmers were encouraged to plant other income-generating crop varieties and decrease or replace the use of chemical fertilisers. Building a consensus among local growers was not an easy task and required the combined efforts of the whole community, with scientists, Communist Party of China (CPC) members, teachers, doctors and other public officials to lead by example and ask their relatives to do the same. Kong, for example, personally communicated with the media, went door-to-door to talk with residents, heard their concerns, and convinced them that threats to the health of the lake ultimately impacted the long-term livelihood of all the residents.

Kong is among the many scientists who have made it their task to ensure the restoration of the lake, which, in turn, ensures that local government policies and measures are scientifically guided. For the last 15 years, China Agricultural University has been exploring a 'Science and Technology Courtyard' model where graduate students are sent to the frontlines of agricultural production, living, working and producing alongside local peasant farmers. Together, they were able to identify core problems, such as pollution sources, address practical issues at the grassroots level, and innovate to find new solutions, such as biofertilisers and pesticides. This day-to-day trust-building has been a hallmark of China's rural campaigns, from poverty alleviation to rural revitalisation efforts.

The life trajectory of He Licheng, the local resident who received me during my visit, has been completely intertwined with that of Erhai Lake. He has been directly impacted by both the pollution and the waves of the government's environmental measures of the past decades. Growing up in Gusheng Village, he earned his income through fishing and fish farming. In the mid-1990s, after the government ban on motorised fishing boats, he was forced to sell his boat for scrap metal. When self-built fishponds were prohibited, he moved to look for work elsewhere and returned a few years later to open a guesthouse after the government's 'village-to-village' project brought roads to his doorstep. Later, his house was among the 1,804 households that were slated for relocation to a nearby community to restore the area he lived in back to wetlands. Finally, in 2021, he contracted a piece of land in his home village to pursue rice and rapeseed farming under the guidance of the Yunnan Agricultural Reclamation Group. After all this, He expressed his pride in contributing to protecting this collective research and is in the process of being a candidate member of the CPC.

Three-petal flowers Ottelia acuminata.

The restoration of Erhai Lake is a concrete example of China's ecological transformation of recent years, which aims to correct the environmental damage that came with rapid economic expansion while setting a new course in the transition to a new energy economy. Recently President Xi Jinping has emphasised the concept of 'ecological civilisation' as one of the key elements of China's socialist modernisation and promoted "green mountains and clear waters," a guiding vision that sees the protection of the environment as a necessary foundation to economic and social prosperity, rather than being at odds with it. Erhai Lake is a good example of how a central government vision gets translated into practice at the local community level, combining scientific investigation, Party-led mobilisation and grassroots democracy.

Globetrotter (edited for space)

Netanyahu and Bukele follow Hitler's rhetoric, Rodriguez

President of Venezuela's Parliament Jorge Rodriguez has said that there is "no difference at all" between the documented speeches of Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler and those of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele.

"If you review the kind of atrocities Adolf Hitler used to say, how are they any different from what Benjamin Netanyahu says? And how are Netanyahu's statements any different from what Nayib Bukele said about our Venezuelan youth who were kidnapped and taken to a concentration camp in El Salvador? There's no difference," he added.

At a recent Summit for Peace and Against War held in Caracas and broadcast by Venezuelan television, Rodríguez said the Salvadoran president "couldn't care less about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and accused him of having "violated" United Nations international conventions on migrants.

The official was referring to the case of the 252 Venezuelans who were detained in El Salvador after being deported by the United States in March ignoring their right to due process, and who returned to the South American country a week ago, as part of a negotiation between Caracas and Washington.

Rodríguez stressed that these detainees were victims of "brutal torture" and that they were "rented by the government of the United States of America to Nayib Bukele," despite the fact that "they had committed absolutely no crime."

He also described Netanyahu as "one of the most atrocious beasts humanity has ever known," and labeled the Israeli government as "criminal and genocidal."

He therefore argued that Palestinian resistance "is the resistance of all humanity."

"If we allow fascism to prevail in Palestine, then all of humanity will have failed," he added.

Telesur

UK: Israel lobby funded half of Starmer's Cabinet

John McEvoy

According to UK Declassified, pro-Israel lobbyists have donated to 13 out of Labour's 25 cabinet members since they were first elected to parliament.

The list of recipients includes Starmer's deputy Angela Rayner, chancellor Rachel Reeves, foreign secretary David Lammy and home secretary Yvette Cooper.

Jonathan Reynolds, who will oversee arms exports to Israel as UK trade secretary, is another beneficiary, alongside Labour's election mastermind Pat McFadden, whose responsibilities now include national security.

Some of the donations were provided by Labour Friends of Israel (LFI), a lobby group which takes MPs on "fact-finding" missions to the region.

Reeves, McFadden, Reynolds and technology secretary Peter Kyle were recently listed as vice-chairs of LFI.

Other major funders include pro-Israel businessmen Trevor Chinn and Stuart Roden.

The total value of the donations amounts to over £300,000 (AU$618,000).

Labour Friends of Israel does not disclose its funders, but was revealed during a 2017 undercover *Al Jazeera* documentary to have close relations with the Israeli embassy in London.

The organisation's parliamentary officer, Michael Rubin, was secretly filmed saying LFI and the Israeli embassy "work really closely together, but a lot of it is behind the scenes".

Joan Ryan, a former Labour MP and LFI chair, was also filmed discussing a potential £1m payment with an Israeli embassy official.

Seven members of Starmer's cabinet have accepted LFI funding to visit Israel, including Reeves, Lammy, and health secretary Wes Streeting.

While Starmer has not received funding from LFI, he has addressed a number of the organisation's events.

In a keynote speech to its annual lunch in November 2021, he repeated the racist and colonial adage that Israel was founded by "social democrats who made the desert flower."

Starmer has called LFI "an invaluable source of energy and ideas for me and my team."

His health chief Streeting meets regularly with LFI inside Westminster, according to *Middle East Eye*.

Israel lobby organisations have also funded advisers to Starmer's cabinet team.

The European Leadership Network (ELNET), a lobby group which aims to strengthen ties between Israel and Europe, has paid for Streeting and Bridget Phillipson's parliamentary staffers to visit Israel.

A parliamentary adviser who went on the delegation told openDemocracy: "there was a clear and obvious agenda to make sure people had a pro-Israel stance going into government."

The staffer added that, after returning from the trip, a senior figure at the Israeli embassy asked: "Did you enjoy the trip we sent you on?"

ELNET's funders include American billionaire and Trump supporter Bernie Marcus, who is a major donor to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

Declassified UK (edited for space)

Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

4:15pm till 5:00pm Wednesday 17 September

USA Consulate, 50 Miller Street North Sydney

Call 0418 270 885

Global Briefs

UK: London's Metropolitan Police have arrested nearly 500 people protesting in support of the Palestine Action group, which was prescribed a terrorist organisation by the UK parliament. The police promised on their official social media to arrest "anyone expressing support for Palestine Action." They delivered on their threats, arresting an 89-year-old woman, a blind man in a wheelchair, and hundreds of others for holding placards or chanting messages of support for Palestine Action and opposition to the UK-backed genocide being committed by Israel. Arrests were also made at other events both in London and across the UK, such as one woman arrested in Belfast for wearing a Palestine Action t-shirt. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper thanked Metropolitan Police for their actions, claiming the arrests were to "ensure peaceful protests."

USA: NASA has been ordered by the Trump administration – via secretary of transportation, acting NASA administrator, and former reality tv presenter Sean Duffy – to prepare for the shutdown of dozens of programs and missions as well as staff cuts. Doing so without congressional approval is illegal, but Duffy and other senior officials have continued to secretly direct plans to terminate two satellites crucial to the monitoring of global carbon dioxide levels. These satellites also play a major role in agriculture through the mapping of photosynthesis. NASA leadership is allegedly pursuing privatisation of the satellites to make up for any loss of federal funding. The previous Trump administration also attempted to dismantle carbon monitoring.

Indonesia: The flag of the Straw Hat Pirates from the Japanese anime 'One Piece' has been the target of government crackdowns ahead of Indonesia's Independence Day. People, particularly youth, have been using the flag as a symbol of freedom and criticism of the Indonesian government. Some government officials have threatened "firm action" and "criminal consequences" for those flying the flag, while others have labelled it an attempt to "divide the unity of the nation." Amnesty International Indonesia's executive director said that the government should "stop repressing freedom of expression and instead focus on the root causes of public dissatisfaction that have prompted people to fly the One Piece flag."

Ecuador: The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) has accused President Daniel Noboa and other officials of the right-wing government of undermining the independence of the Constitutional Court. This comes after the Constitutional Court ordered the temporary suspension of several provisions within laws rushed through by Noboa. These provisions included amendments to intelligence law which would have allowed undercover agents to assume false identities, enabled government intelligence to obtain information on any citizen from telecom companies, and authorised the use of funds without following public procurement laws. Other provisions would have given Noboa the power to pre-emptively pardon police and military personnel for crimes committed under what Noboa has declared the "internal armed conflict" against gangs. CONAIE has previously criticised the Noboa government for hostilities against Ecuador's Indigenous Peoples, such as the use of forced evictions and attempts to install Noboa allies into Indigenous leadership positions, in cooperation with corporations including Canada's Solaris Resources.

Sudan: The UN refugee agency UNHCR has reported that militias in Sudan regularly threaten fleeing refugees, saying "You can run, but we will find you." Displacement and attacks on civilians continue to escalate in Darfur and Kordofan, while a combination of ongoing violence and seasonal rains disrupts the delivery of humanitarian aid. The ongoing conflict between factions of the military, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, has subjected millions to hunger, sustained a refugee crisis, contributed to a worsening cholera epidemic, and littered the landscape with unexploded ordnance. International weapons manufacturers have been profiteering from the violence despite arms embargoes.

The world in a nutshell: an interview with Vijay Prashad

Zhao Dinqi

Guardian readers will be familiar with Vijay Prashad, Marxist writer, speaker, and academic, from the many pieces of his work published in the *Guardian*, as well as 'Leg Glance' an occasional column on cricket he writes for us. The following is an excerpt from an interview with him on **mronline.org**

Zhao Dingqi: Why did you grow up to be a Marxist? Could you briefly introduce your personal experience and academic career?

Vijay Prashad: I grew up in Calcutta, India, and then in northern India. During my youth, I was deeply impacted by the prevalence of urban and rural poverty. The grotesque inequalities of life and the ubiquity of feudal type social relations (especially the hierarchy of the caste system) was deeply objectionable to me. My parents raised me with the values of decency and good behaviour, which seemed impossible to sustain in an indecent society. I was angry at the world, and then when I began to get involved in small struggles and read Marx, I realized that my anger was necessary but insufficient. I needed to be in an organisation, I needed a theory of social transformation, I needed discipline. This is what drew me into both a more serious academic study of the roots of social inequality in India (the subject of my doctoral dissertation, which was on the social history of an oppressed caste community) and to struggle against the conditions that prevented social transformation (which drew me into the left movement).

ZD: What is the significance of Marxism in the 21st century? Is Marxism, as some believe, outdated, and unsuitable for today's era?

VP: Marxism, which is an ever-evolving field of analysis, is the most accurate critique of capitalism. As long as capitalism remains with us, Marxism must remain until another form of critique – better than Marxism – appears. Thus far, no clearer critique of capitalism has been developed. It is true now as it was in 1867, when Marx published *Capital*, that the exploitation of the working class produces surplus value and it is this surplus value that creates the accumulation of capital in the hands of the capitalists and immiserates the worker. It is this accumulation of capital in the hands of different capitalists who compete with each other that creates the conditions for a general crisis in society. If there is a better explanation of these crises that afflict us, then I do not know it.

INDIA

ZD: In recent decades, the Indian economy has developed rapidly, but under the capitalist system, various contradictions in Indian society are also very acute. What are the main social conflicts currently facing India? What social oppression are the Indian people facing?

VP: India's economy grows rapidly because there is a large pent-up demand that began to settle over the country after the early phase of reforms in the post-independence era. A deficit in infrastructure had to be fulfilled, which has not fully occurred, but it does account for some of the growth. The growth, however, is uneven. One of the great problems of the Indian economy is the failure of the state to conduct agrarian reform and thereby create conditions of relative social equality in the countryside. Wretched social inequality, exacerbated by the caste hierarchy, means that the old forms of subordination remain intact and are even exacerbated by the increase of wealth amongst the more powerful sections in society. So, you get growth, but very uneven and unequal growth. This creates great social turmoil, which is held down by the state's instruments of force (both the legal apparatus that is used to designate dissenters as anti-national, and the apparatus of violence that cracks down hard on social protest, including the protest of farmers).

ZD: What is the current development status of the communism movement in India? What are the main Marxist political parties and organisations?

VP: The communist movement in India is weak due to the depletion of the reservoirs of strength for such a movement, that is the weakness of the trade union movement in the manufacturing and service sectors, and the weakness of the agricultural workers' movement in the countryside. The organisation of the working class – both urban and rural – is weak due to the forms of disarticulation of society and the workplace that is a mark of the neoliberal era. If the working class is weakened, the left is weakened. There are three main parties of the communist movement: the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or the CPIM, the Communist Party of India or the CPI, and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation or simply Liberation. These are the legal parties that have a role in the national and provincial parliaments. There is also the Communist Party of India (Maoist), which is banned and operates in the countryside. The total strength of these parties' numbers in the hundreds of millions, but that is still not sufficient to move a decisive agenda at this time.

GLOBAL SOUTH

ZD: When was the concept of the Global South proposed? How do you understand this concept? What does it mean in the present?

VP: The Global South is an idea that first came to world attention with the Brandt Commission (1980), where the South referred to the countries that marinated in poverty as opposed to the North, which referred to the former colonial powers. The concept was elaborated by the South Commission (1989), which was chaired by the former President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere and had a Commissioner from China – Qian Jiadong. The concept for the South Commission was developed to refer to the developing countries that had to build an agenda for their development, not just the countries that were stuck in poverty. That was an advance. The South Commission, which had studied the remarkable developments in China's Shenzhen region, advanced the agenda that dependency was not permanent and that a break could come with the transfer of technology and the proper harnessing of domestic resources. This was far more than what had been on the table from the old modernisation development agenda.

ZD: After the end of World War II, although colonialism withdrew from the historical stage, the exploitation and oppression of the global South by imperialist countries still existed, forming neocolonialism. What are the manifestations of the neocolonialism?

VP: Neocolonialism was a term used by Ghana's president Kwame Nkrumah in 1965 to refer to the situation of flag independence (he was the victim of a coup the next year). Countries gained political sovereignty but were not able to control their own economies. This lack of control took place because they had to borrow money from overseas for almost everything (even to pay their public sector bills) and they had to allow foreign companies to exploit their resources because they had neither the capital nor the technology nor the expertise to do so. This lack of financial and scientific power left these countries prey to their former colonial masters. In our time, the basic outlines of neocolonialism remain intact for many countries, exacerbated by the seemingly endless spiral of debt. The current total external debt of developing countries is $11.4 trillion, and over 98 per cent of the export earnings of these countries is used to pay off wealthy bond holders. This makes development impossible. That is the structure of contemporary neocolonialism. It was this structure that produced the theory of dependency, articulated by Andre Gunder Frank as "the development of underdevelopment."

Vijay Prashad in Sydney.

ZD: How do you understand the significance of China's Belt and Road initiative for the Global South?

VP: The Belt and Road policy – first articulated in 2013 as the One Belt, One Road policy – initially had everything to do with the attempt by the Chinese government to pivot away from reliance on US and European markets after their collapse in the financial crisis of 2007. It became clear in Beijing that the markets of the Global North would not be permanently available to countries such as China. To seek new markets, Beijing looked to continue the western development policy in Western China (including Xinjiang, Tibet, and Qinhai) started by Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, and then to expand it into Central Asia. But beyond that, the Belt and Road sought to build infrastructure across the Global South to facilitate a more harmonious economic development between China and those regions. From 2013 to 2024, China's BRI engagement reached a total of (AUD $1.8) trillion, including investments, loans, and donations. This is a significant transformation of the development agenda. It has been studied in parts, but not properly in totality to understand the theory of the BRI. I hope that more people will accumulate more of the evidence from the BRI sites and develop a proper theory of development from this new experience.

Marxism – ever evolving – is the most accurate critique of capitalism

Ireland to Lesotho – Trump's tariffs hit hard

Graham Holton

In April 2025 President Donald Trump introduced so-called 'Liberation Day' tariffs, triggering the worst two-day drop in US stock market history, erasing trillions in value. These tariffs were later reduced. New tariffs were implemented on 7 August with a baseline 10 per cent tariff on imports, with elevated rates for China, EU, and Mexico.

The rationale for the tariffs was economic – Trump argued that international trade was "unfair" to the US. His plan was to use tariffs to force countries to buy US-made goods, or to make their own goods in the US. It soon became obvious he was using tariffs as a threat to countries that didn't do what he wanted. India was hit with an additional 25 per cent tariff for buying Russian oil. Brazil has been threatened with a 50% tariff because its Trump-like ex-president is facing prosecution.

Effects have been chaotic. The new tariffs deadline for goods in transit is 5 October 2025. Some importers have avoided paying US$12.6 billion in tariffs by advance purchasing. *Vox* warns tariffs are a US$152 billion annual tax hike on US citizens, equalling US$2.2 trillion over the next decade.

By May 2025, the US had collected US $42.6 billion in additional tariff revenue. Since tariffs are passed onto US consumers, the OECD has downgraded US GDP growth to 1.6 per cent for 2025, and reduced global growth to 2.9 per cent. Global corporations' earnings have taken a US$15 billion dive. As predicted by many economists, the tariffs have made life more expensive for US companies. Caterpillar, who make tractors, have had a 6.5 per cent cost increase, while brewer Molson-Coors expects US$35 million in increased costs.

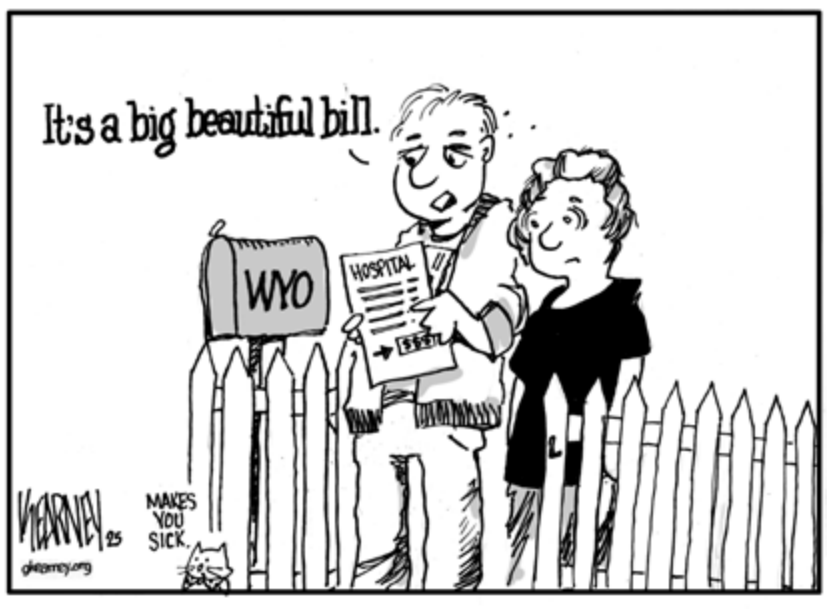
The 17 per cent tariff on Mexican tomatoes and a 30 per cent tariff on other Mexican goods will hit US consumers. A study by the Tax Foundation estimates the average US household now pays US$830 more annually, and Yale University economists have projected a US$2,400 annual increase per family.

As well as straining relations with 'allies,' tariffs have encouraged protectionism, leading to trade wars and fragmented economic blocs. This has caused global supply chain disruptions, especially in the automotive, electronics, and manufacturing industries. The resultant political polarisation has caused many countries to look to China for trade. Multilateral organisations, like the WTO, have been weakened, as has global cooperation during climate change crises.

Seven lawsuits have been filed, with federal courts ruling that the "Liberation Day" tariffs may exceed executive authority. The decisions are being appealled. Trump's tariff rates have been heavily criticised by economists, business leaders, and free-trade conservatives. CEOs are unable to make long-term investment strategies and businesses have threatened to decouple from the US market due to Trump's unpredictability.

Ireland could be particularly hit by Trump's deal with Apple, which has agreed to increase its US investment over the next four years to US$600 billion to avoid increased tariffs. This is up US$100 billion from its original deal. Ireland's Minister for Finance has indicated that this could threaten around 80,000 jobs in Ireland. US technical and pharmaceutical companies invest in the republic to minimise their tax rates. Apple is crucial to the local economy, contributing to job growth and business development. If Apple pulled out, Ireland would lose its claim to €13 billion in unpaid taxes. Trump's tariffs of 150 per cent on pharmaceutical industries would also have a detrimental impact on Ireland's economy.

Lesotho, a small African country inside South Africa has been hit with what Trump calls "reciprocal" tariffs of 50%. A big maker of denim and clothing, Lesotho has declared a national state of disaster because of tariff-related uncertainty.



10 million US citizens will lose health insurance coverage as a result of Trump's 'Big Beautiful Bill.' Hospital costs are expected to massively increase as well. (Comic: *People's World*)

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Delivery

PM Albanese has said that his government is "focused on delivery." Good-oh, if you make a promise, you might as well keep it. Except for the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which Albo promised to commit to "in full," reducing power bills by $275 per year by 2025, deliver 450 gigalitres of water for South Australia. He seems to feel that he's all out of delivery there.

Threaten

Threats aren't vague, we know how they work. The weasellish use of 'threaten' is when no actual threat exists. Attempts to put a bit of fairness into school funding in Australia are often criticised for threatening choice (usually by people who aren't fussed that the vast majority of us don't have choice when it comes to schooling). By the time you read this, it's not impossible that Albanese has located his spine and decided to recognise Palestinian statehood come September, but in the meantime one of his excuses for not doing so was that recognition might "threaten the existence of Israel." We don't know how that would work either, but he would have cheered the people who think that any let-up in the genocide is an existential threat to the apartheid state.

Genuine

We all like things to be genuine and not fake. In industrial relations, 'genuine' reform tends to mean 'reform I want.' So it is that some apparatchik from the Institute for Public Affairs has grizzled about wanting a 'genuine' reform agenda at the forthcoming Productivity Summit. For good measure, she thought it would be good for the nation if the agenda was 'led by a balance of opinion.' It's a very long-winded way to say that she wants the bosses to go all-out in assaulting workers' pay and conditions and win, but that's what the IPA is for.

Pro-aspiration

If anyone is in the mood to criticise Albanese as being a reincarnation of John Howard, here's some evidence for you. Howard was very fond of 'aspiration,' the idea being that people would vote for him in the hope of one day being wealthy enough to be the sort of people he was running the country for.

Now Albanese has ruled out changes to the negative gearing rort, whereby people who own more than one property get a tax break if their rent doesn't cover the mortgage on property 2, 3, 4 or above. He's not doing this because he's terrified of criticism from negative gearers and the Murdoch media, goodness no. Albo has stirred up the masses by saying that the Labor Party "can't send a message that is anti-aspiration. We have to be pro-aspiration." It's a very specific form of aspiration they're in favour of. If you aspire to not have to choose between eating and heating your home while unemployed, bad luck. Go buy an investment property and the Labor government will be with you all the way.

'Non-lethal'

After months of unconvincingly telling everyone that Australia does not in any way arm Israel, Foreign Minister Penny Wong finally decided to bite the bullet and admit what everyone knows; parts for the F-35 jets used to bomb Gaza are made here. It's almost as if she was lying earlier! Ever weaselly, but with no idea how silly she sounds, Wong has insisted that Australia only makes "non-lethal" F-35 parts. She's been far too busy to explain which parts of an F-35 are non-lethal, or, if the stuff we're selling Israel isn't lethal, why they want it at all. The Victorian government proudly announces that over 700 "critical" pieces of the jet are made in the state. If they're critical, they help the thing be lethal, we don't just make the fluffy dice the pilot hangs over the rear-view mirror.

Hiroshima, Nagasaki
NEVER AGAIN?

Linda Pentz Gunter

For 80 years, the Hibakusha (survivors) of the United States atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been warning the world — "never again." Never again should such weapons of terror be used, on civilians or on anyone. Never again should human beings treat other human beings as sacrificial and expendable. Peace is the only way forward, they plead.

Now it is 80 years since those two terrible days on August 6 and 9, 1945, when the United States chose to end the lives of what would eventually become at least 200,000 people in a callous public relations exercise to prove its might to the Soviet Union. Today, those Hibakusha still alive must surely be asking: "why haven't you been listening?"

Even though the world has not used nuclear weapons again in war, the nine official nuclear-armed nations went on to "test" their nuclear weapons more than 2,000 times on other innocent communities mostly far away from their own – including in the Pacific, Australia, and the Sahara – and even, in the case of the US, on its own people in Nevada. The very first atomic victims were of course those downwind of the 16 July 1945 Trinity test in New Mexico that launched the atomic age and the nuclear arms race.

Thanks to luck but certainly not wisdom, we have not yet arrived at the finish line of nuclear annihilation. But we have not won the race to eliminate nuclear weapons, either.

Despite international efforts, first with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968 and then the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that entered into force in 2021, nuclear powers are arming up, not drawing down.

The United States already has 5,428 nuclear weapons but is looking at spending around $95 billion a year on the euphemistically named "modernisation" of its nuclear arsenal, code for "expansion." For example, the US has ordered the development of a new B61-13 nuclear gravity bomb, just one part of a significant rebuild.

The Russian arsenal remains the world's largest with 5,580 nuclear weapons. Russia claims to have tested new nuclear weapons, including undetectable ones, and the US has accused Russia of planning to develop a space-based anti-satellite nuclear weapon, something the Russians deny.

France, which possesses 290 operational nuclear warheads – the fourth largest inventory in the world – is also "modernising" its nuclear weapons systems. This year, it chose to allocate at least 14 per cent of its defence budget to nuclear "deterrence" operations, up from 12.5 per cent in 2020.

The British government announced in June 2025 that it would purchase 12 nuclear-capable F-35A fighter jets from the US and raise its spending on defence to 5 per cent of the national GDP by 2035. Britain is also replacing its Vanguard nuclear-armed submarines with a new class of Dreadnought submarines equipped with Trident II D-5 missiles, at an estimated cost of at least £31 billion (AUD $64 billion).

Report: Vinnie Molina, CPA President

The Borloo/Perth Hiroshima and Nagasaki NEVER AGAIN initiative was endorsed by WA based organisations: The Greens, Socialist Alliance, IPAN, Medical Association for the Prevention of War, Nuclear Free WA and Stop Aukus-WA.

The action attracted a good number of activists and passers-by.

An all-women panel of speakers made it clear that Hiroshima and Nagasaki must NEVER again happen on its 80th anniversary.

Speakers included: MC, Elly Hulm, CPA; Greens MLC Sophie McNeill; Lexi Goff, CPA; Leigh Dix, MAPW; Mia Pepper, Nuclear Free WA; Ellen Morrison, IPAN. An open mic heard from Sam Wainwright on behalf of Stop AUKUS-WA.

By July 2025, there were clear indications that US nuclear weapons, specifically the B61-12 thermonuclear gravity bomb, were already back in Britain at RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk, actually a US air force base despite its misleading name.

India and Pakistan show no intention of abandoning their nuclear weapons programmes.

Israel, the only undeclared nuclear-armed state, endowed with a unique status by the United Nations of not having to confirm nor deny the existence of its atomic arsenal, has anywhere between 80 to 200 nuclear weapons. South Africa remains the only country ever to develop and then dismantle its nuclear weapons.

Other countries aspire to join the nuclear club, but they disguise their plans under the pretext of civil nuclear power programmes. However, once in possession of the materials, technology and nuclear knowhow to develop a civil programme, the transition to nuclear weapons is, while not straightforward, eminently possible. This is precisely how India came to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran's civil nuclear programme was bombed last month by the US and Israel, despite Iran being a signatory to the NPT, and even though the International Atomic Energy Agency had said there were no active signs that Iran was developing nuclear weapons. The bombings happened for one reason only; because Iran's civil nuclear programme gave it the capacity to transition to nuclear weapons production.

The bellicose rhetoric around Iran has abated somewhat, particularly in light of revelations that, despite Trump's claims that Iran's entire nuclear operation had been "obliterated," this was almost certainly not the case.

Instead, the bluster ramped up in other quarters, most notably just days before the 80th commemoration of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. That was when Trump, easily provoked, rose to the bait after the former Russian leader, Dmitri Medvedev, admonished him for putting a deadline on a Russian ceasefire with Ukraine.

Medvedev even referenced Russia's Cold War era "Dead Hand," which can allegedly automatically launch a nuclear attack in response to detecting an incoming one.

Trump called Medvedev's remarks "foolish," which should have been an end to the matter. But Trump does not like to be told off or languish in anyone's shadow. Consequently, he announced that he had moved two of the country's nuclear-armed submarines closer to Moscow.

The threat was meaningless, of course, because the 14 US Trident missile-armed submarines, at least eight of which are at sea at all times, have a massive firing range of 7,400 kilometres, already easily within striking distance of Russia. Unless Trump is unaware of this (eminently possible), moving them closer didn't change anything.

Nevertheless, this verbal volley served as a reminder of what an actual nuclear exchange would mean, conjuring images of what it looked like the first time.

Except that the next time will not look like the first time, and no-one even saw the images from that first time for more than two decades. US authorities assiduously suppressed photos and film footage captured in the horrific aftermath of the atomic bombings in Japan. The American public did not see newsreel footage of the carnage for another 25 years or official military footage until 40 years later.

Meanwhile, the plane used to drop the bomb on Hiroshima – the *Enola Gay* – is displayed in the Smithsonian's Udvar-Hazy Center, in Virginia, part of Washington DC's National Air and Space Museum, a proud monument to one of humankind's greatest depravities.

Clearly, empathy was already absent when the atomic bombs fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Empathy was not there either in the extermination of Native Americans, in the Nazi death camps or the rice paddies of Vietnam. It is not there now in Gaza.

How can we sound the warming of the Hibakusha more urgently – that harbouring weapons capable of exterminating all life is an unaccepable abomination?

And how do we heed the words of the late Japanese-American US senator, Daniel Inouye, inscribed on the National Japanese-American Memorial in Washington, DC, also a monument to the Japanese-Americans interned during World War II: "The lessons learned must remain a grave reminder of what we must not allow to happen again to any group."

Before long, most of the Hibakusha will be gone. They will join the other ancestors from past and now present atrocities, who stare back at us with horror, asking us "why are you still letting this happen?"

Morning Star

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