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Build public housing

M Santos

> "Over the past 30 years, housing in Australia has become a vehicle for private wealth accumulation. Housing is now a primary driver of widening intergenerational wealth inequality in Australia, affecting millions."
>
> The Greens

One in three households are going hungry as the cost-of-living crisis deepens, according to research by the charity Foodbank. Rental stress is among the primary drivers of this crisis, housing insecurity, and homelessness.

A new *Domain* report shows entry-level prices of housing nationally rose by almost 70 per cent over the last five years. Over the same period, wages have fallen in real terms by five per cent.

Rising inflation and successive interest rate hikes have hit potential and existing homebuyers hard. Rents have surged as landlords passed on interest rate rises and other rising costs to tenants.

Those hardest hit by the housing crisis include young people, people with disability, social security recipients, First Nations people ,and women fleeing or economically unable to flee domestic and family violence.

Hands Off Glebe group hangs banner "Build Public Housing Here" in Camperdown, Sydney, 2024.

WALLOWING IN PROFITS

As millions of households struggle to put food on the table, pay bills and keep a roof over their heads, banks, big property developers, and owners of multiple properties rake in ever larger profits.

The big four banks made a combined gross (pre-tax) profit of $43 billion last financial year, mostly from mortgage holders, in particular first-home borrowers according to the Australia Institute (TAI).

TAI estimates that the big banks make $228,900 in profit on a 30-year owner-occupier home borrowing $736,000!

For banks and investors, housing is a commodity, not a home, where purchasers and tenants can be ruthlessly exploited in the name of generating ever larger profits.

"Housing hardship is not confined to the housing budget. It determines whether people can afford food and healthcare today, but it is also shaping whether they can study, change jobs, buy a home, live near the people who support them, care for loved ones or prepare for retirement," Everybody's Home noted in its report *No Room to Move*, following a survey of more than 1,100 people.

"People are already making **enormous sacrifices** just to afford a place to live. They're skipping meals, avoiding the doctor, putting off major life decisions and, in some cases, staying in unsafe homes."

"Perhaps one of the most troubling findings is that 77% of renters surveyed have avoided asking for repairs, fearing a rent increase or being forced to move with nowhere affordable to go."

Some were made sick and even hospitalised as a result of substandard rental accommodation.

Everybody's Home puts it plainly: "No one should have to choose between paying the rent, keeping their home at a safe temperature, or putting their health at risk."

A number of respondents reported spending far more than 50% of their income on housing. Some were running up huge debts or working more than one job in an attempt to stave off homelessness.

"I have lived in fifteen places since I left him, ending up in share-housing at fifty because even though I'm employed full time I can't afford a lease on a rental home," one respondent said.

"I go to bed at 7pm to save on energy and food. I have been eating once a day for a year," another said.

GOVERNMENT FAILURE

Respondents experiencing the housing crisis were clear about what they want governments to do. When asked to choose the federal government's highest housing priorities, by far the most common response was to build more public and community housing. Only 15% nominated helping first-home buyers as one of the three highest priorities compared to 77% seeking public and community housing, and limiting rent increases.

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> "I have been homeless in the past and it is frightening. I also have stayed in an abusive marriage in the past because I couldn't find anyone to rent to me as a single mother on a Disability Support Pension. The day I was able to get into private rental and support my kids on my own was liberating, and 6 years later when I got a public housing place my life changed forever. For the first time in my life I had housing security."
>
> **Respondent to *Everybody's Home* survey**

No one should have to choose between paying the rent, keeping their home at a safe temperature, or putting their health at risk.

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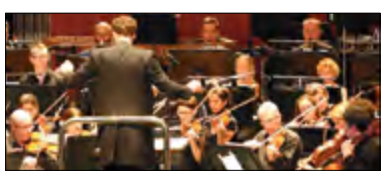
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Guardian

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BLAME GAME

The Albanese Labor government blames the rest of the world for problems which are largely or partly down to Labor's own actions, caused by the crisis-prone capitalist system it serves. The government is beholden to what a former Labor leader called "the big end of town," large corporations, and to the US. Let's look at a few issues where Albanese has passed the buck.

Climate Change has already inflicted huge financial and human costs on Australia, through floods and bushfires that would have either not happened or been much less severe without it. Albanese talks the talk, making nice speeches about Climate Change to Pacific Nations. In Australia he does not walk the walk, as his ministers talk about "jobs" and "investment" from fossil fuel projects that make more pain inevitable. One reason Albo is in power is the (quite accurate) voter perception that the Coalition didn't take Climate Change seriously. Albo talks as though he understands it, but throws fuel on the fire.

When it comes to inflation and cost-of-living pressures, Labor's treasurer says the government is "hostage ... to decisions taken in DC or Tehran or in Eastern Europe about two wars which are pushing up inflation around the world and weighing on growth." We could almost shed a tear for him. Chalmers could raise the rate of JobSeeker and other allowances, making inflation more bearable for those most affected. He could crack down on profiteering by the fossil fuel giants and other Labor donors which really adds to inflation, but he won't.

We have a housing crisis. A huge number of Australians are under housing stress, spending so much on keeping a roof over their head that they have to make hard decisions on food and medicine. It doesn't have to be this way, but Labor won't touch rent limits with a bargepole. It won't go near the massive expansion of quality public housing that would really make a difference.

Speaking of Iran and Russia, it's pretty rich for Chalmers to blame those countries' decisions for inflation. Labor made sure that Australia was the first other nation to support the US-Israel war on Iran, and has consistently backed the NATO confrontation with Russia. Australian governments don't just ask "how high?" when the US says "jump!" They're already in mid-air looking for approval before Washington has asked. Labor has continued that tradition.

After talking a lot about the 'rules-based order,' Labor's response to unprovoked US-Israeli attacks on Iran was to furrow its brow and talk about the need for a better Iranian government. Labor isn't hostage to decisions taken in the Middle East and Europe. Australia is hostage to US foreign policy and Labor has helped tie the ropes.

HELEN HAINES

Guardian, the Workers' Weekly **condemns the appalling attack on independent MP Helen Haines which left her fighting for her life after losing both legs. The Communist Party of Australia stands squarely against the misogynistic threats that women in public life face in this country. Women deserve to participate in politics without facing threats, abuse, or assault.**

The CPA demands the Australian government work with the community to defeat right-wing violence.

Build public housing

Continued from page 1

Respondents also sought safe, well maintained rental properties with guaranteed security.

So, what have governments been doing?

"Successive Labor and Coalition governments have severely neglected investment in public housing and community housing, which has dropped to a record low of 3.7% of all housing stock," Greens spokesperson for housing for, finance, housing and homelessness Senator Barbara Pocock said.

"It's time for the government to get back into the business of building public housing directly. We've done it before, we can do it again. We need a federal housing department that can lead and deliver, not a series of struggling separate silos missing every target.

"We need a national target of at least 10% of public and community housing as a share of all housing stock."

In addition to pouring billions into assisting home buyers, the government has set up Housing Australia under management of the Future Fund to increase the number of 'social' and 'affordable' homes.

'Affordable' housing is defined by Housing Australia as rent paid at 74.9% of market rate, which would plunge many households into housing stress. Their definition of 'affordable' is unaffordable to many.

'Social,' or community housing is owned by a charity or a non-government, not-for-profit organisation. The housing they run varies widely. Tenants can be evicted or have their rent suddenly increased as the organisation sees fit.

Public housing is long-term rental housing directly owned, managed, and maintained by government departments where tenants pay 20-30% of their gross income on rent.

At the same time 640,000 people are in need of **genuinely** affordable housing.

INSUFFICIENT INCOME

Another priority was raising income support. There are no rental properties that are affordable for those on JobSeeker or Youth Allowance of a maximum of $416.85 per week in the major cities.

In Sydney, for example, studios, one-bedroom apartments, granny flats or rooms in shared accommodation cost around $500 per week upwards.

As mentioned above real wages have gone backwards in the face of inflation and record high rents. In major cities housing rents of $800-$1,000 are out of reach for those on the minimum wage of $1,004.90 per week unless sharing with others.

Single parents, mostly women, and casual and part-time workers also face enormous rental stress or homelessness.

The federal government has a critical role to play in building public housing and ensuring everyone has a home that is affordable, decent and secure.

POLICY

The private sector, driven by maximum profiteering, has failed to provide affordable, quality homes for millions of households. Serious and substantial reforms are urgently needed by governments at all levels.

Australia needs a major, sustained program of investment in public and community housing, targeted first and foremost at renters on the lowest incomes. Payments and rental allowances for the unemployed, students, pensioners, carers and other social security recipients must be raised. The minimum wage must be raised.

Rent controls are essential, including on the frequency and size of increases. The ACT has already demonstrated that governments can do this. So far it is the only Australian jurisdiction with a formula limiting the amount by which rents can usually increase during a tenancy.

Other states and the federal government must follow with controls.

Every rental home should meet clear minimum standards for safety, health and energy efficiency.

"As the third richest country in the world, there is no excuse," said Senator Pocock.

Quote of the Week

"Australia has a long history of inviting itself to American wars. We're now inviting ourselves to war with China."

Military historian Albert Palazzo.

Permanent replacement for contentious Hobart statue unveiled

Callan Morse

A permanent replacement for southern Tasmania's controversial William Crowther statue has been unveiled in Hobart's Franklin Square.

The architectural installation, which includes a native garden surrounded by a "ring of truth-telling" replaced the statue of Crowther – a surgeon and politician during the 1800s – which was toppled in 2024 shortly before a tribunal upheld a Hobart City Council decision to arrange its removal.

According to most historians, Crowther broke into a Hobart morgue and stole the skull of Aboriginal man William Lanne, who was also known as King Billy, following his death in 1869 for the purpose, Crowther claimed, of scientific examination.

Crowther's actions and the statue – which was erected in 1889, four years after his death – have long distressed Aboriginal people, with calls for the statue's removal growing louder in recent years.

The Hobart City Council voted to remove the Crowther monument in 2022, with the Crowther Reinterpreted project guiding the process.

After multiple temporary truth-telling artworks were displayed at the statue site over the last five years, the ceremony marked the completion of the project's fourth and final stage.

Hobart Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds said the project intended to provide "a more honest and complete understanding of Hobart's history."

"It's not about erasing history, but rather providing even more information, context and a broader range of perspectives that have often been absent from public spaces," she said.

"This installation recognises a history that hurt Tasmanian Aboriginal people and culture. It also creates a place for reflection, discussion, and truth-telling in the heart of Hobart."

Replacing the monument is a native garden and a circle of bronze around the vacant plinth which once held the statue.

Nunami Sculthorpe-Green, who has Tasmanian Aboriginal and Warlpiri heritage, was one of three writers who contributed to the ring's inscription along with history writer Alison Alexander and arts writer Andrew Harper.

Sculthorpe-Green wrote about William Lanne and life for Aboriginal people in Tasmania during the 1800s.

She said the project provided her with an opportunity to "centre the humanity" of Lanne within the story.

"It's not about changing our history, it's about widening the narrative of what's included in our history," she said.

"This marks a great first step on how cities and spaces can be more inclusive of their own history and of Indigenous people that live in these spaces still."

The architectural installation was designed by local firm Taylor & Hinds Architects.

Architect Matt Hinds said the bronze ring was in reference to the material of the original Crowther statue, and to Lanne's work on whaling ships, on which bronze was an essential material.

"It's been repurposed as a ring of truth-telling, effectively like a halo of light, and the three narratives run in that," Hinds told the ABC.

"What it requires is that people walk in a circular way, almost meditatively, around the perimeter of the garden and take in the messaging of what's been written."

In addition to the dozens of attendees at the unveiling ceremony, a small group of protesters held signs in opposition to the project.

They included Hobart councillor Louise Elliot, who said she did not support the "erasure of history."

"Dr Crowther was a really good person, he was loved by thousands across Tasmania ... and I think it's wrong his memory has been used as an outlet for anger," Elliot said.

National Indigenous Times

Op Ed: The economic 'value' of military bases

Denis Doherty

In a lifetime of travelling to various militarily significant towns around Australia I have often have been met by a cry from the state and local government authorities that the local military base was crucial to the state's, the town's economy.

In towns like Rockhampton, Alice Springs, and Exmouth peace demonstrators were greeted with horror that prosperity and/or jobs were being threatened.

Even last year's Indo-Pacific Expo (arms fair) was justified by the NSW State government on the very feeble grounds that it could potentially increase our tourist trade (come to Sydney, check out the Opera House, the Harbour Bridge, and Taronga Zoo. Why not browse missile systems too?).

The answer to this sort of nonsense is that the impact of military bases is negative and does not achieve any local long lasting economic effect, as goods and services needed by the military are so specialised that they come from out of area or even overseas.

In a recent article 'Busting the myths of US military presence on Hawaii' by US bases expert David Vine, the worth of military bases to the local area is explained. Vine's explanation of the true worth of US bases to local areas in Hawaii is very relevant to Australia.

Some time ago the anti-bases movement here commissioned a geography PhD student to do an economic study on the economic worth of Pine Gap to Alice Springs. His findings were much the same as Vine's.

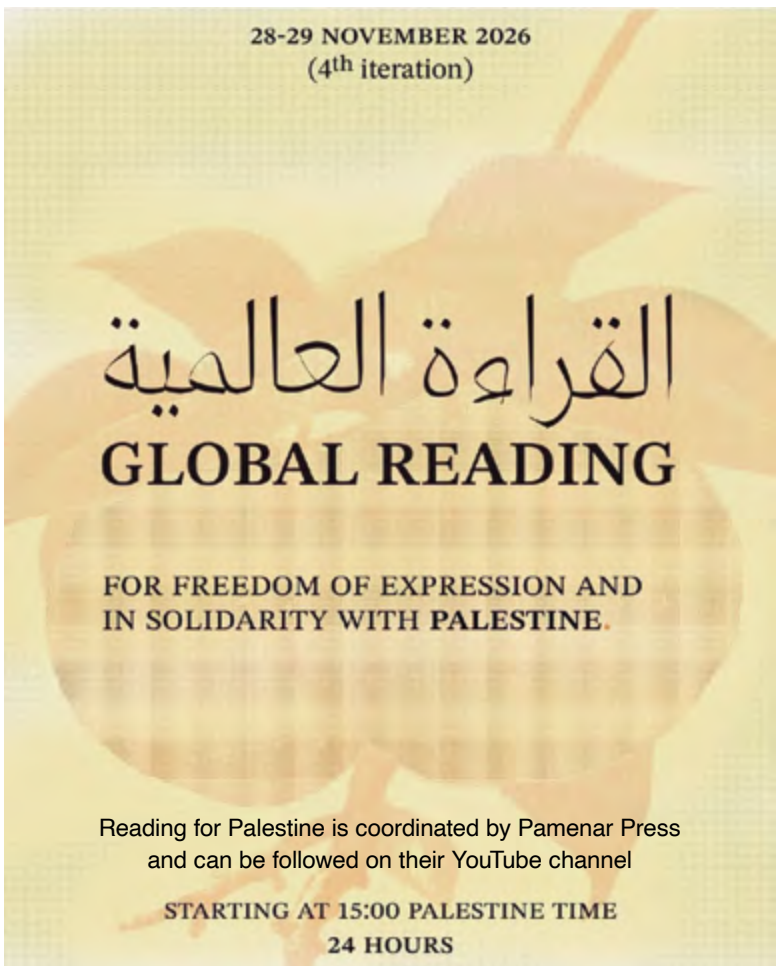
Drawing on what are collectively more than 45 years of experience studying the US military, our calculations show that the Pentagon and others have been exaggerating the military's positive impact by billions of dollars. Meanwhile, the military's presence is driving up rents and fuelling the housing crisis, damaging the environment and public health, and limiting the growth of industries that would create more local jobs than the military.

Defence Minister Richard Marles and others in the Albanese government persist with the excuse that military spending on AUKUS and other items will bring jobs! Figures like 6,000 to the Henderson area and 10,000 across WA sound great, but we know that investment in almost any other industry would create far more jobs.

The last word on military spending should be go to Michael Parenti.

In 'The Sword and the Dollar' he wrote:

"All the arguments made against runaway military spending – that it is socially wasteful, that it creates fewer jobs per dollar than any non-military expenditure, that it produces scarcity, and poverty in the civilian sector, that it is the single greatest consumer taxes and a major consumer of precious minerals, fuel, metals, land and water – are all true but largely irrelevant to the powerful interests that feed at the public trough."



Gambling reform

Thirteen Alliance for Gambling Reform (AGR) Leadership Councils from across Victoria have joined forces in an open letter calling on Premier Ben Carroll and every candidate standing at the 28 November state election to deliver long-overdue action on gambling harm.

The open letter, It's Time for Overdue Action on Gambling Harm, is being delivered to the Premier and to all candidates contesting the election, urging them to commit to two evidence-based reforms:

Deliver Mandatory Carded Play with compulsory loss limits – the reform the Victorian government committed to in 2023, requiring every poker machine user to set a loss limit before they start gambling.

Extend the statewide mandatory shutdown of gambling venues to run from midnight until 10am, protecting people when they are most at risk.

In 2025-26, Victorians lost $3.318 billion on poker machines – the highest losses on record and a figure that continues to climb year after year.

The letter warns that behind those losses are families under financial strain, children going without food, increased family violence, deteriorating mental health, homelessness, and rising demand on community services.

While the government committed to Mandatory Carded Play in 2023, it took two years for a trial to run across 43 venues – and at the last minute, the loss limit, the key harm-prevention mechanism, was made optional. Mayor of the City of Monash, Stuart James said "We must do more to protect our communities from pokies, one of the most harmful forms of gambling. We have the technology to reduce that harm, but it will only work if carded play is mandatory with binding pre-set limits. If government is serious about reducing gambling harm, responsibility must shift from individuals to where it belongs; onto the gambling industry."

"Gambling reform is long overdue. Victorians were promised change, and every week of delay leaves more families paying the price: domestic violence, mental health challenges, children going without food on the table and, at its worst, suicide. It's time for the government to act," said AGR Chief Advocate Rev Tim Costello.

The letter also points to evidence that people experiencing gambling harm are almost three times more likely to be using poker machines between midnight and 4am, making a strong case for extending venue shutdown hours.

"The evidence is clear and the community is waiting," the letter concludes. "Now is the time to act on your commitment.

Call to scrap Youth Allowance

Prominent charity Anglicare Australia is calling on the federal government to abolish Youth Allowance as a lower-rate payment and bring young people onto the same working-age payments as other adults.

A new report, *Falling Short*, released as part of Anti-Poverty Week, finds that:

A young person living at home with their parents has just $34 left each week after paying for food and transport, assuming they pay no rent and have their food costs halved.

A young person in shared accommodation falls behind by $52 a week after paying for rent, food and transport, with rent set at just $178 a week.

A young person living alone would fall behind by a staggering $382 a week.

"These figures show that Youth Allowance is setting young people up to fail," said Anglicare Victoria CEO and report spokesperson Paul McDonald.

"Young people pay the same prices at the supermarket, the same prices for transport, and the same rents as everybody else. But our income support system expects them to survive on less.

"Even in our most generous scenario, where a young person lives rent-free with their parents, they have just $34 left after food and transport. That's barely enough to cover a phone bill, let alone healthcare, clothing, study costs or saving to move out. For young people who can't live at home, the situation is dire. Even with a cheap room in a share house, Youth Allowance falls short of the basics.

"We are calling for Youth Allowance to be abolished as a separate, lower payment. Young people over 18 living independently should be on the same working-age payment as everyone else.

"But we can't stop there. JobSeeker and other working-age payments are themselves well below the poverty line. Moving young people from one poverty payment to another isn't enough. We need to raise the rate for everyone.

"Our social security system should help young people study, find work, and build an independent life. Instead, it is holding them back before they've even had a chance to get started.

"Young people don't have lower living costs just because they're young. It's time to end the lower payment rates that are keeping them in poverty."

Anglicare

Workplace safety alert

MB

Australian unions are demanding better enforcement of safety standards including prosecutions along with the immediate endorsement and implementation of Safe Work Australia's Best Practice Review, in response to an increase in the number of workplace deaths, particularly in remote parts of Australia.

Figures from Work Safe Australia show that 222 Australian workers were killed at work in 2025, the highest annual death toll in more than a decade since 2012.

Workers in remote Australia are around eight times more likely to be killed at work than the national average, highlighting a significant safety divide between metropolitan and remote Australia.

Six industries account for around three-quarters of workplace fatalities – agriculture, construction, transport, manufacturing, health care and social assistance, and public administration and safety.

Vehicle collisions remain the leading cause of workplace deaths, whether on roads, farms, mines, or worksites, tragically continuing to claim more workers' lives than any other type of fatality with major companies like Cleanaway again recording multiple fatalities over the last 12 months.

Mental health claims have also increased from around 6,600 to 17,900 serious claims over the past decade, making psychological injuries the fastest-growing category of workplace harm and highlighting the ongoing stress that Australian workers are under.

Sydney Vigil

STOP USA BLOCKADE ON CUBA

4:15pm till 5:00pm Tuesday 17 November

USA Consulate, 50 Miller Street North Sydney

Call 0418 270 885

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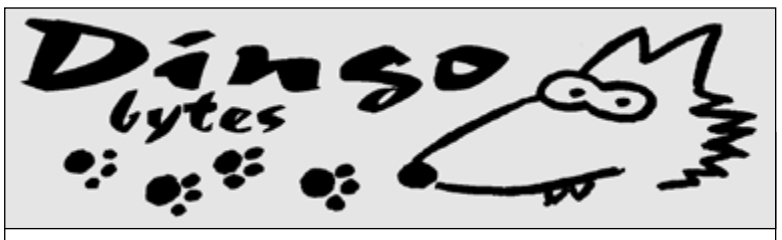


Here's what's behind the Grattan Institute's call for an increase to the goods and services tax (GST). The aim of a GST is to shift the payment of taxation away from corporations and high-income earners onto the shoulders of middle-and low-income earners. Every man, woman, and child becomes a taxpayer.

It has become a common ploy by governments to offer sweeteners to try and bribe an otherwise unwilling population to accept bad economic policies. In 1999 the exemption of food from the GST was put forward by the Howard government while allowing the government to establish a GST on most other goods and services.

The GST can be amended and the rate increased as has happened in most other countries which have a GST – or the range of goods and services taxed can be extended.

Governments repeatedly argue that the tax system is a shambles and so must be reformed. The current pay-as-you-earn system while not perfect, is relatively progressive. GST is regressive. It does not take into account differences in incomes – it is a flat tax. There is no such thing as a fair GST.

Example, at the supermarket Gina Rinehart and Dingo come to the checkout with the same amount of groceries in their trollies and pay the same amount of GST. Rinehart's personal wealth, $11 billion. Dingo's personal wealth, zero.

Governments have made concession after concession to the big corporations to minimise their tax payments. An increasing number of companies avoid paying tax altogether. The GST allows governments to continue this process of corporate tax cuts. This is how shifting taxes to what we spend rather than what we earn favours the rich.

We need real reforms that benefit the people, that transfer the tax burden onto the corporations and the rich in order to raise the revenue required to adequately fund our hospitals, schools, universities, and social services and our entire economic infrastructure.

PARASITE(S) OF THE WEEK: are the education privateers. The Commonwealth will spend $20.6 billion subsidising private schools this year, almost two and a half times the $8.4 billion it provides to all 39 public universities, according to a new report from the National Tertiary Education Union.

The report, *The $12.2 billion divide*, finds the gap has widened over the past decade, with real government funding per private school student rising 24.8 per cent between 2013-14 and 2023-24 while real Commonwealth funding per university student fell 10 per cent.

The gap is widest in the courses hit hardest by the former coalition Morrison government's 2021 Job Ready Graduates (JRG) funding model. In 2024 the Commonwealth contributed just $1,236 a year for each student in disciplines including journalism, communications, law and economics, against average government funding of $15,262 for every private school student.

The report estimates the Commonwealth could make university fee-free for around $7.2 billion a year in additional investment, roughly a third of what it spends subsidising private schools.

National Tertiary Education Union National President Dr Alison Barnes said, "Governments keep pouring money into private schools while public universities are left chronically underfunded. That ever-widening gap has potentially disastrous outcomes that go well beyond staff and students. Underfunded universities hurt our sovereign capability, democracy, health system, and broader wellbeing of communities."

Creative workers to rally for arts and live performance

Creative workers, artists, and arts organisations from across Victoria will rally on the steps of the State Library to demand urgent action to address the growing crisis facing the state's arts, cultural and live performance sectors.

The Rally for the Arts will bring together performers, musicians, crew, arts workers, artists, and supporters to call for renewed investment in the arts ahead of the Victorian State Election.

The campaign seeks action to protect creative jobs and keep live performance accessible, with calls for increased arts investment, support for venues, and a cultural pass scheme that helps connect more Victorians with live arts and culture.

Many arts organisations have faced years of funding cuts, leaving them struggling to survive, while artists are forced out of the sector with opportunities disappearing across the state.

The rally is being organised by the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) and the Don't Break Our Arts campaign, with support from creative workers, artists and arts organisations across Victoria. It has attracted support from groups including the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA), Writers Victoria, Theatre Network Australia, Ausdance Victoria and the Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV).

The campaign is calling for the Victorian government to restore funding cuts to arts organisations and new cultural investment in arts and live performance in a state once renowned for its vibrant arts scene.

MEAA Acting Chief Executive Adam Portelli said, "Creative and arts workers are the backbone of Melbourne's famous arts and culture scene, and a key reason why Melbourne was recently named best city in the world.

"With live performance facing rising costs and early cancellations, the Victorian government needs to step in. A cultural pass scheme will allow Victorian audiences greater access to the shows they want to support.

"The Victorian government cannot continue to celebrate Victoria as the nation's cultural capital while failing to adequately invest in the people who create that culture.

"This rally is about standing up for the future of the arts and live performance and ensuring that creative workers have a sustainable future in Victoria."

Ursula Searle, MEAA's Victorian Equity Section President, said, "The rally isn't just calling for investment, it's calling for audiences and artists to stand up for the art they love.

"Artists from all corners of the industry are standing in solidarity for the first time in Victoria because our industry is essential.

"If audiences want to go to the theatre, a live gig, or enjoy public art, they should stand with us at the rally to show political parties that they value the arts in Victoria, and that arts workers are deserving of a safe and secure industry."

"The arts in Victoria are in crisis," said Max Delany, Don't Break Our Arts campaign organiser and former director of the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art.

"Funding has been slashed to artists and the small-to-medium sector. We know some organisations are facing closure and artists are leaving the sector – it is now becoming existential for many," Delany said.

"Victoria's reputation as a creative and cultural leader wasn't built by accident. It was built through investment, vision and support for artists and arts organisations. We need to rebuild that commitment."

Prominent Melbourne visual artist Andy Butler warned that "as public funding continues to be eroded, audiences are losing the chance to see bands, watch performances, go to exhibitions and read new local writing."

"The artists, performers, musicians and writers who made this state renowned are being left behind," Butler said. "A culture built over decades can't simply be rebuilt once it's gone. This rally is our chance to make our voices heard before the state election."

Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Photo: Kieran Krud – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

'A port licence is not a licence to strip workers' rights'

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has condemned reported attempts by Gladstone Ports Corporation (GPC) to introduce sham contracting arrangements through its exclusive harbour towage tender, warning that essential port services must not become a vehicle for dismantling secure employment and collective bargaining.

The union is calling on Workplace Relations Minister Amanda Rishworth to deliver sweeping legislative reform to stamp out sham contracting and prevent employers disguising employment relationships as commercial "partnerships" to avoid their obligations to workers.

MUA Assistant National Secretary Jamie Newlyn said the proposed approach threatened a proven system that had delivered for Gladstone's maritime workforce and port users for four decades.

"For 40 years, enterprise agreements between towage operators and Gladstone workers have provided secure employment for generations of local maritime workers and guaranteed the delivery of essential towage services to the port.

"This system works. There have been no industrial stoppages across that 40-year period. Enterprise agreements provide certainty for workers, operators, and all port users.

"So why is GPC apparently looking for an alternative that risks undermining the very arrangements that have delivered stability and reliability for decades?"

The MUA understands the tender process has sought proposals involving sham "partnership agreements" for tug crews. The union is demanding that GPC disclose the employment arrangements it has requested, encouraged or rewarded in evaluating bids.

"A port licence is not a licence to strip workers' rights," Newlyn said.

"Calling a tug worker a 'partner' does not change who controls the work, sets the roster or carries the commercial risk. Our members are skilled maritime workers. They should not have to surrender secure employment and collective bargaining to keep doing their jobs.

"GPC must explain why it would put a successful employment model at risk in pursuit of an arrangement that could shift business risk onto workers and sideline their unions."

The successful bidder would receive an exclusive harbour towage licence for up to ten years.

Newlyn also criticised GPC's refusal to engage with the workforce.

"Despite several attempts by the unions to meet with GPC and raise serious concerns about the job security of the people who keep Gladstone moving, CEO Andrew Johnson has personally refused to meet their representatives.

"When the future of an essential service and the livelihoods of an experienced local workforce are at stake, refusing to sit down with the people affected raises serious questions about what GPC is trying to achieve and why it is unwilling to explain itself."

Newlyn issued a direct warning to the remaining bidders, particularly Chile-headquartered towage group SAAM.

"SAAM and Svitzer should commit now to directly employed tug crews, genuine enterprise bargaining with workers' chosen unions and protection of existing workers' jobs, service recognition and accrued entitlements.

"There is no acceptable bidder for an unacceptable employment model. We will judge every bidder by how it proposes to employ and treat the people doing the work, not by its corporate presentations."

The MUA is demanding full disclosure of tender provisions and evaluation criteria relating to crew partnerships, removal of any preference for arrangements that displace direct employment, and independent scrutiny of proposed contracting structures before a licence is awarded. The union is also calling for legislative reform to close loopholes that enable sham contracting.

"GPC must not turn this tender into a competition over who can push the most risk onto tug crews.

Maritime Union of Australia

Sham contracting

Everyone knows what a contractor is. They're 'contracted' to do a specific job for a defined period. The contractor reaches an agreement with the person they're selling their services to. Instead of wages, they're paid by the job. The person paying them doesn't pay superannuation, leave or tax, but pays one amount for the job required.

Sham contracting is when a large employer forces workers to pretend to be contractors. The workers are told they have to get an ABN and often public liability insurance in order to get the work. Unlike genuine contractors, the workers have no choice over hours or pay, so for them it's like any other job except that they have no sick pay, leave entitlements or super, and they have to do the admin work of calculating tax.

It's illegal to represent to a worker that they're a contractor when the business doesn't reasonably believe this. Proving that a business is engaged in sham contracting can be difficult and unions can help.

FK

Climate-fuelled bushfires to cost $6bn a year

Bushfires supercharged by climate pollution will cost Australia's economy a staggering $181 billion over the next 30 years ($6bn annually), new modelling released today by former emergency service chiefs has found.

The report, Prepare or Pay: Counting the Cost of Climate-Fuelled Bushfires from Emergency Leaders for Climate Action, shows that Australia is in a new era of fire, where major fire events are striking every three to four years as pollution from coal, oil and gas worsens extreme fire weather.

The $6 billion annual bill includes the toll on people's health and wellbeing (32%), lost business output (25%), damaged schools and workplaces (20%), damaged homes (17%) and lost work (6%).

Fire crews are doing more with less. Fire seasons are 21% longer than in 1979, shrinking the windows for hazard reduction burns and limiting the ability of states and territories to help each other.

Firefighting volunteer numbers dropped by 10,336 between 2019 and 2023/2024, while paid positions grew by only 433.

The report estimates that making fires a fifth less damaging could protect more than 5,600 jobs every year.

Founder of Emergency Leaders for Climate Action and former Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, Greg Mullins said:

"Firefighters are heading into this summer with a hotter climate baseline combined with what's shaping as a record-breaking El Niño: a double act that could seriously increase fire risk in southeastern Australia. What worries me is that the 2027/2028 summer could be even hotter.

"We're now in an era where fire seasons are longer and more intense, property losses are growing, and once rare fire-generated storms are six times more common than they were 20 years ago. But we know that if we invest in community preparedness, we can reduce misery and loss.

"Governments have a clear choice: prepare now for worsening fires or pay later for the huge damage they will cause. Preparing now means building safer homes, stronger community infrastructure, and better resourced fire services."

Mullins said "As always, firefighters will give everything they have, but they need governments to back them for the long term. Political leaders must stop approving new coal and gas projects that fuel worsening fire weather, and tighten national laws that do little to rein in polluting corporations."

Jessica Yu, Director and Economic Advisory Lead at Connell-Griffin who provided modelling for the report said:

"You don't have to lose a home to pay the price for worsening bushfires. We have shown how these events are costing billions across the Australian economy when you count the farms that can't harvest, the businesses forced to close, the jobs lost and the toll on people's health and wellbeing. The figures in this report are conservative and they show that the costs are growing."

"Cutting climate pollution and preparing communities helps families and the economy."

Prepare or Pay: Counting the Cost of Climate-Fuelled Bushfires recommends the Australian government help communities by finalising and funding a detailed National Adaptation Plan. The plan includes measures to include backup power for mobile towers in high-risk areas.

The plan also advocates for Australia to build aerial firefighting capacity to reduce reliance on overseas aircraft, as fire seasons increasingly overlap.

(Editor's Note: During the 2019-20 bushfire season, reliance on overseas aircraft was a major issue, with Australia having to borrow aircraft from the US and Japan.)

Emergency Leaders for Climate Action

'Prepare or Pay: Counting the Cost of Climate-fuelled bushfires' is available from emergencyleadersforclimateaction.org.au)

Palestine Sydney Rally
11 October in Sydney's Hyde Park

Denis Doherty

A rally of around 5,000 heard several important speakers urge all to continue the struggle for Palestine liberation. The task of sanctioning Israel and stopping all arms shipments to Israel is still with us. The author of the book The Weight of Witness: The Experiences of Australian and New Zealand Medics in Gaza, Dr Bushra Othman gave a harrowing account of doing operations without drugs on small children. Greens Senator for NSW Mehreen Faruqi also spoke on 3 years of genocide, 3 years of solidarity, and 8 decades of Palestinian resistance. She also talked about 3 years of gaslighting on Palestine from Labor, Liberals and reminded demonstrators of the comradeship with others around the world.

Rise Up Sydney Rally
17 October Goddard Park Sydney

Denis Doherty

Two Communist Party of Australia branches from Sydney participated in this all-Sydney action for better planning and housing for the Sydney area. Representing the suburbs of Glebe and Lidcombe, the City of Sydney Branch stressed that new development at Bays West should be given over to more public housing.

From the west of Sydney, the Cumberland Branch were campaigning for the Carnarvon Golf course in Lidcombe not to be turned into a cemetery. There are many suburbs that are facing a sudden influx of high residential towers under the current State Labor government, so the rally was also attended by representatives from other areas such as Rose Bay, Mosman, Drummoyne, Concord and many more facing huge increases in population without any planning for infrastructure in hospitals, schools, child care.

Minns 'protects' NSW from his own laws

Peter Farmer

One way to look at the High Court's Mount Pleasant coal mine decision is this: the high court was "affirming the letter of the law and, by implication, asking the authorities to go back and do their job."

That's how journalist Royce Kurmelovs puts it. What the court found was that planning authorities in NSW are legally obliged to think about how they can limit the pollution resulting from coal mined in the state when that coal is burned.

For a long time fossil fuel producers have said that they're not responsible for carbon emissions that result from their product being used for its' intended purpose. Like gun manufacturers, they wash their hands of the predictable results of their business.

The Minerals Council of Australia has reacted strongly to the Mount Pleasant decision, pushing the line that the ruling meant the emissions were being counted twice.

The NSW government put out a statement about the importance of coal to "the state's economic prosperity." Not long after, NSW Premier Chris Minns declared that his government would produce a "jobs guarantee" for workers at the coal mine.

Minns said that his government has a responsibility to cut emissions, "we can't turn our backs on the workers and families who rely on these jobs today." Minns announced that his government will pass a Bill "authorising an increased annual production limit of 16.5 million tonnes until 2032.

As climate activist Michael Mazengarb has said, there's nothing like watching the NSW government "protect" a coal mine expansion from the operation of its own planning laws. Mazengarb's verdict is that the NSW government is "clearly deeply unserious about its climate policies."

For more on Minns, Australia, and the climate crisis, see raisinghell.media

Despicable NAB

The Finance Sector Union (FSU) is deeply concerned for the wellbeing and financial security of NAB workers following a ruthless management decision to launch mass layoffs, with most jobs set to be eliminated by Christmas.

Some 1,500 families face a bleak festive season thanks to the bank's sudden announcement of savage cuts across the banking group. The remaining 1,000 will have to wait in limbo until some time in the New Year to see if they have a job at all.

Around 180 roles will also be offshored to NAB offices in Vietnam and India. NAB staff are already reporting high levels of stress and anxiety from unbearable workloads caused by previous job cuts.

The union noted that the announcement is typical of the way NAB management treats its workers, who learned about the cuts via an email from CEO Andrew Irvine at the same time as the stock exchange was told.

At a meeting which Irvine did not attend, management were unable to answer basic questions put by the union, including what roles will be impacted and when workers will learn if they will lose their jobs.

They also refused to confirm whether the cuts were due to AI.

The FSU will meet with its NAB members over the next few days to decide ways to fight back against the cuts and provide support at this difficult time.

In the meantime, the FSU is calling on Irvine to meet with the union immediately to provide clarity and give a proper justification for slashing its already threadbare workforce by 6%.

Irvine will still enjoy a Merry Christmas courtesy of his self-administered $6.5 million annual paycheque, although he may face the wrath of investors who saw the bank's overall 2025 financial year profit drop to $6.7 billion over the same year.

FSU National Assistant Secretary Nicole McPherson said, "NAB staff have suffered a year from hell after previous cuts and were no doubt looking forward to a break from the doom and gloom over Christmas.

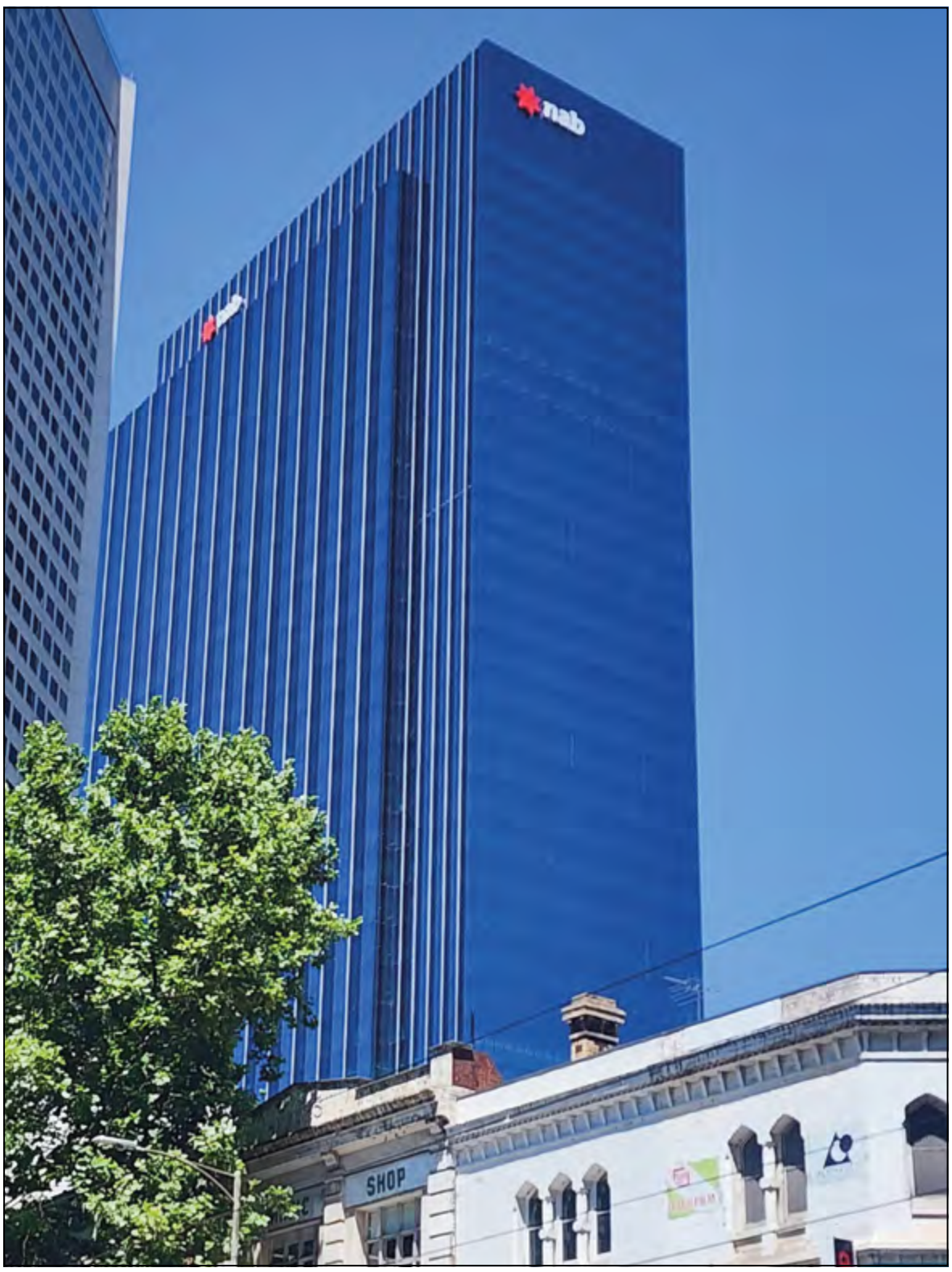
"Instead their holiday cheer has been replaced with uncertainty over their futures.

"The actions of NAB management are despicable and have been compounded by the contemptuous way they have kept their workers in the dark.

"NAB's public statement about the cuts was nothing but corporate spin but its intention is clear – NAB sees its workers as a barrier to profits and a problem that can be swept aside with ruthless cuts.

"NAB workers are people – people with families, people with financial responsibilities, people who are already close to breaking point to deliver NAB its record profits. These people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, and so far NAB has shown them none."

Finance Sector Union



National Australia Bank HQ in Naarm/Melbourne CBD. Photo: Shkuru Afshar – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

www.cpa.org.au

PEACE NOTES

Denis Doherty

BULLY BOYS

Former South Australia Senator Rex Patrick used Freedom of Information legislation to win the right to know where Australia's nuclear waste from AUKUS is going to be stored. He has not been granted access to the files. The government has refused to release the information, and introduced legislation that would see a petitioner for information pay costs should they take the government to court.

Minister for Defence Richard Marles says "Australia has decades to decide on where this waste will go so there is no need to panic." A formidable team of Parliamentarians including Senators Jacqui Lambie, David Pocock, plus Monique Ryan MP along with barristers have lined up against the government to oppose the restrictions on FOI and the lack of transparency about AUKUS. The nuclear waste from weapons-grade plutonium has a half-life of 24,000 years. Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and the Northern Territory have banned nuclear waste.

Marles at the Defence Horizon Breakfast

In a Channel 7 event, the 'Defence Horizon Breakfast,' Richard Marles opened his remarks with this statement: "Australia's most consequential strategic risk is not that our country will be invaded but rather that a potential adversary would seek to coerce us by impacting our economic connection with the world, our sea lines of communication." This is presumably a reason to invest heavily in submarines and the Henderson support area for nuclear submarines. Marles gave West Australia a thumbs up for its support of military spending and participation.

He pointed to the Strait of Hormuz as an example, saying that closing the strait affects oil prices here despite Australia having nothing to do with the conflict. Marles didn't mention that Australia has gone out of its way to support the illegal actions of the US and Israel in that war and has expelled Iranian diplomats on flimsy evidence.

Iran quite rightly regards Australia as a combatant in the US-Israeli war. In other words the risk of totally interrupting our trade and economics depend on our diplomacy or lack of it. Sending a submarine to the environs of a blocking country would hardly resolve the situation permanently. Australia has its own food supply and its own renewable energy capability. Iran, Cuba, and many other countries have survived blockades and sanctions for years. This excuse for AUKUS does not stack up.

Since the 'Defence Horizon Breakfast' was a West Australian event, Marles heaped praise on former Labor leader and former Defence Minister Kim Beazley for his foresight in developing a big military presence in WA, soon to be "the home of our national submarine fleet" (or, more likely, a staging ground for US submarines). The reality was that in 1987 Beazely was engaged in pork barrelling and making sure that his post parliamentary career would see him ensconced on arms corporations' boards and well paid for the rest of his life.

Marles's speech mentioned the Cocos and Keeling Islands among already known bases such as Tindal. Are these islands about to become a further insertion of US forces on our territory? The US has expressed an interest in upgrading their presence there.

Also proudly announced at the breakfast, the Albanese government has "invested" an extra $117 billion in the military. Not announced; they have to cut aged care, the NDIS, and other programs to be "responsible."

Universities, encampments, and the military-industrial complex

Romola Nolan

On 29 April 2024, we held our first Gaza Solidarity Encampment meeting on the balcony of the Australian National University student union. Inspired by students at Columbia University in New York, we joined the growing University Encampment movement that helped make Palestine solidarity the largest mobilisation triggered by a foreign event since the Vietnam War.

Moved by our understanding of structural complicity in Israel's profound and explicit destructive violence against Palestinians, we called for BDS – boycott, divest from and sanction the Israeli apartheid regime. We rejected the invisibility of this genocide.

The growing power of the 'military-industrial-academic complex' (MIAC) has emerged alongside a tradition of student and faculty resistance. I illustrate the stark corruption, hypocrisy and complicity of increasingly neoliberal tertiary institutions.

The deep interdependence of the MIAC makes it vulnerable to mass action. Anti-imperialist and anti-colonial student actions, from the 1960s to now, have raised our collective political consciousness and built organising experience. The encampment didn't achieve BDS, but I argue that the university's reaction demonstrates that we, activist students, pose a threat to the MIAC. We must keep challenging it.

NEOLIBERALISM AND THE MIAC

Universities are increasingly implicated in imperial and colonial violence which is tied to military-industrial projects. Over the course of the 20th century, universities changed from a means of reproducing an educated elite to a mainly state-funded public institution promising social mobility and democratising intellectual and political development.

The 1980s marked a turn toward neoliberalism, with its agenda of privatisation, deregulation, tax cuts, management power, and short-term profit.

Colleges of advanced education were merged into universities, to get expansion on the cheap. State funding fell from 90 per cent in the 1990s to 45 per cent of University budgets in 2015. Now, the majority of funding comes from student fees and private corporations.

Universities have been encouraged and often forced to raise student intakes, outsource, casualise and cut staff. Universities have invited private funding for research and teaching programs, determining research interests. Increasing proportions of university budgets are now funded by the defence sector.

The government "sees both strategic and economic value in militarisation," enhancing international strategic ties and promising national productive growth through these lucrative industries.

Defence is already an economically integral sector in the US. Australian universities are increasing their investments in the defence sector, seeking to support our employment and industry by 'Military Keynesianism' – boosting the economy through spending on 'defence' industries. Having come to rely on foreign suppliers, the Australian government announced in 2017 its goal "to become one of the top-ten defence exporters [in an effort to increase] strategic advantage and economic prosperity."

At ANU, three different weapons manufacturers, whose products are purchased by Israel and the US to be used in Gaza, offer scholarships, paid internships, and postgraduate employment with loan repayment benefits. Two of these, BAE Systems and Northrop Grumman have said they plan to expand their academic partnerships in Australia and build our domestic industry.

In 2021 the number of contracts issued from the Department of Defence to Australian Universities was four times that of 2014, the highest it has ever been.

In 2022, ANU leadership proudly committed to partnering in the AUKUS deal to help develop nuclear submarines despite community protest. AUKUS entrenches Australia's economic, military and political dependence on the US and UK and forces us to step into line with their geopolitical agenda.

That same year, Universities Australia went so far as to make "a public submission to the 2022 Defence Strategic Review," explaining how they could make themselves useful. New institutes and centres for developing military technology have been partnering with dozens of universities across the country.

The proliferation of these institutions gives defence industries undue influence over our knowledge production sector. Worse still, increasing militarisation driven in large part by the MIAC, contributes to regional tensions and fuels the competition it claims to be responding to. As economies become increasingly dependent on weapons production, they come to rely on sustained demand for arms and thus upon unspeakable death and destruction.

IN BED WITH THE MILITARY

Solidarity Encampments are part of a larger movement calling to BDS Israel. It is a direct legacy of the South Africa BDS movement that economically isolated South Africa and successfully condemned the apartheid regime. ANU's encampment was built on the historical legacy of ANU students working against our government's complicity in imperialist regimes.

Over the course of 2024 we held 'teach-ins,' where faculty and community members joined us to teach us language and culture, as well as about settler-colonialism, imperialism, and their persistence today.

There's a proud history of protest at ANU. In 1965, student protesters hosted a teach-in against the Vietnam War. Students rallied outside the hotel in which US President Lyndon B Johnson stayed on a visit in 1966. In 1969 they rallied against conscription for a week. In 1970 they cancelled lectures to 'participate in a national moratorium against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.'

In 1968, ANU students travelled to Naarm to support the struggle for Aboriginal land ownership, continuing a legacy of resistance to protest land-theft and neo-colonial expansion. In 1970, thirty-five students were arrested and charged over their actions in the 'Day of Rage' demonstrations. In March of 1971, ANU students held a vigil at the South African High Commission. Carrying signs such as 'toot against apartheid,' hundreds of students maintained the action around the clock for 'many months.'

The movement for Palestinian liberation is fundamentally anti-colonial. It's grounded in an awareness of our own settler-colonial state, which continues to treat Indigenous people as second-class citizens and seeks to extinguish their sovereignty.

The privatisation of ANU was more than a cash grab. From the start, it tried to rule out left-wing dissent. There was resistance. In 1994 over 150 student activists occupied the chancellery building for more than a week, as part of their 'No Fees' campaign. They were removed by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) who used chainsaws to enter the building. In 2001, students staged an occupation of the ANUTECH building to protest corporate sponsorship.

The introduction and escalation of punishing student debt transformed the purpose of higher education. Students can no longer view themselves as developing critical democratic knowledge. Instead we are studying to raise our individual value as human capital. This raises the stakes for student activists. Our future security is profoundly threatened by institutional retribution.

On 27 May, the police were called to assist ANU security in vacating the Gaza Solidarity Encampment, citing 'safety.' As at Columbia and other encampments globally, we were formally and informally supported by faculty and union members. Staff, via the National Tertiary Education Union, were also already fighting the effects of neoliberalism.

'FEISTY'

ANU University leadership says it celebrates a "long and feisty history of activism." They don't mention repression of movements that criticise the institution. Vice-Chancellor Bell praised the University's "proud tradition of student activism" adding that she committed to "ensuring that such expressions occur within a framework of respect and safety."

For ANU, 'safety and respect' meant soliciting state force, expelling two students and threatening a dozen others for their 'diverse perspectives' and 'engagement with global issues.' As protestors have developed means of challenging its reach, the MIAC has been developing its own playbook of quashing dissent. They use hard power, such as the real or potential threat of state violence, and they use soft power to attempt to define the bounds of acceptable political speech.

Over the 110 day occupation, ANU leadership issued bad faith statements about student safety and damage to the lawns. They called students into private disciplinary meetings where they tried to elicit information, threatened expulsion and expelled students over political speech. They used intimidation and surveillance, and they lied about us to the press.

The encampments, as others have observed, 'helped to revive and strengthen a politics of left internationalism during a period of world-systemic declines in left politics.' Recent worldwide solidarity marches and the internationalist Sumut Flotilla stand as evidence of the shifting discourse to which we contributed.

Edited for space from 'How Did We Get Here: Universities and the Militarised Political Economy of Death' in *Demos Journal*, demosjournal.com

the movement for Palestinian liberation is grounded in an awareness of our own settler-colonial state

What China's Global Initiatives offer the World

Vijay Prashad

Guomao District, Beijing CBD. Photo: Jens Schott Knudsen – flickr.com (CC BY-NC 2.0)

At a moment of war, debt, corporate power, and technological dependency, five Chinese proposals reopen a long-suppressed question: what institutions are needed to make peace, sovereignty, and development materially possible?

The fires of war burn from Palestine to Ukraine and from Sudan to Iran, demoralising billions of people around the world who suffer from the inferno and inflation. There seems to be no exit from these conflicts, no way to envisage how they will end.

The NATO powers delusionally seek the defeat of Russia, while the United States seeks to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran. Neither of these outcomes is within the realm of possibility: Russia is a nuclear power capable of facing an existential threat, while Iran has demonstrated that it is capable of seriously harming US assets in the region. The white flag of surrender will not fly, but the aggressors are not willing to seriously come to the negotiating table.

Against this background, the Chinese government has proposed five initiatives:

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Through infrastructure, trade, and investment, the BRI aims to help build a 'global community of shared future,' a vision set out in the Chinese government's 2023 white paper. Its two main components were first proposed a decade earlier: an economic belt across Central Asia, announced in Kazakhstan in 2013, and a maritime silk road, announced in Indonesia.

The Global Development Initiative

At the United Nations General Assembly in September 2021, amid the pandemic, President Xi Jinping suggested that a development plan – such as the UN's 2030 Agenda – should be an organising purpose of international relations.

The Global Security Initiative

At the Boao Forum for Asia, in April 2022, Xi proposed a vision for countries to develop themselves without planning for permanent conflict and coercion. The principles guiding development must rest on respect for territorial integrity.

The Global Civilisation Initiative

Announced in 2023, the initiative affirms civilisational diversity and different paths to modernisation. This was a direct rejection of the assumption that development requires imitating foreign cultures and institutions.

The Global Governance Initiative

In 2025, at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting in Tianjin, Xi brought institutional reform into sharper focus through five concepts: sovereign equality, international rule of law, multilateralism, a people-centred approach, and genuine results.

Taken together, these five initiatives are a formidable basis for a global conversation not only on peace but on its material foundation: development. Their promise must be judged by whether they help our societies create pathways to peace, build productive capacity, and exercise control over economic life. These initiatives attempt to restart a conversation that culminated with the 1974 adoption by the UN General Assembly of the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order.

China's proposals show that what we need is not piecemeal reform of this or that global institution, or a ceasefire in this or that conflict, but a general overhaul of multilateralism that ensures not only formal equality between states but an end to the profound inequality in economic power.

These five initiatives do not, by themselves, establish a new international economic order. Currently, the international economic regime is a collection of rules governing trade, investment, taxation, debt, and technology. These rules are developed to enforce corporate power rather than to encourage international democracy. They are shaped by transnational corporations (TNCs), which can overpower governments by moving investment, shifting profits, and playing jurisdictions against one another. What can these initiatives achieve if the actual rules of the game continue to put corporate profits above all else?

The five initiatives' broad principles will need to be turned into a program of the Global South. This should include greater Southern influence in financial institutions, development finance suited to industrial transformation, and trade and investment rules that permit economic diversification. These principles open a conversation, but the task before the Global South is to give them institutional force. Here are five areas in which that program can take shape:

Taxation

A 2015 Oxford University working paper estimated that tax avoidance by TNCs could cost developing countries around $213 billion a year in the long run. This number was underestimated at that time and is surely much higher now. To deal with this problem, negotiations began in 2025 on the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation.

It is only fair for countries to exchange information about TNCs, require public reporting by jurisdiction, prevent firms from winning concessions through threats of relocation, and cooperate to tax profits where real economic activity takes place.

Labour standards

States should agree on enforceable protections for trade unions, collective bargaining, workplace safety, and freedom from forced labour. They should share inspection evidence and give workers ways to pursue claims across borders. Lead firms must face defined responsibilities for abuses in supply chains. Regional agreements can reduce the incentive to compete for investment by suppressing wages and rights. The International Labour Organization's declaration on multinational enterprises provides guidance; binding enforcement requires further legal commitments.

Corporate accountability

In 2014, the UN Human Rights Council established a working group to negotiate a legally binding instrument on business and human rights. More than a decade later, negotiations have produced successive drafts but no adopted treaty. A serious regime would reform investment agreements to protect legitimate public regulation and make corporate obligations enforceable. This should provide for investigation of corporate malfeasance, liability for companies whose conduct or failures contribute to harm, cooperation between judicial authorities, and enforceable remedies through a credible international legal system.

Technology access

The negotiations over the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing annex to the World Health Organisation Pandemic Agreement provide a concrete arena in which countries of the Global South can press for technology cooperation that builds their productive capacity. The talks concern access to vaccines, treatments, and tests. The agreement's provisions on technology transfer offer a starting point, although their reliance on mutually agreed terms leaves too much dependent on the willingness of private rights holders.

Public funding and procurement should carry enforceable conditions to secure technology licences, share practical knowledge, train workers, and strengthen domestic research and suppliers. Southern countries can combine purchasing power and jointly fund research institutions, while retaining the right to use compulsory licensing where international rules permit.

Access to patents alone cannot create the capacity to manufacture: countries also need equipment, skilled workers, and the knowledge required to organise production. The task is to turn the agreement's commitments into obligations with clear targets and deadlines, enabling countries to adapt, improve, and produce technologies themselves.

Debt and finance

The UN's Sevilla Commitment provides an opening for countries of the Global South to organise collectively for a fairer sovereign debt regime, drawing on the longstanding work of UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on debt restructuring. Its platform for borrowing countries should enable them to coordinate demands for transparent lending, timely restructuring, and binding rules that prevent private creditors from obstructing settlements.

The intergovernmental process envisaged by the commitment should become a route towards an enforceable multilateral framework that protects essential public spending and judges repayment capacity alongside the investment needed for economic transformation.

Tricontinental Institute

current rules are developed to enhance corporate power rather than to encourage international democracy

Letters to the Editor
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Immigration and imperialism

Furthering the discussion surrounding immigration can give focus to the broader struggles of workers in the age of imperialism.

National borders are one of the means used by the elite representatives of capital (the bosses) to regulate labour (us as consumers and workers).

This control serves the wealthy elites as borders are used so as to allow a trickle of skilled migrants to enter countries with historically reasonable living standards so as to disadvantage local workers in a competitive labour market, while also locking up sources of cheap labour in countries exporting goods and services at bargain prices in the service of multinational corporations (mostly US) – hence, enhanced profits for the already super wealthy from both markets. Both labour markets have a "reserve army" (of the unemployed), which is endemic to capitalism as it views labour as a commodity which can be dispensed with in the pursuit of increased productivity.

As the origins of the nation state are somewhat aligned to capitalism and operate with a consent orchestrated by the power of money, the sly servants of the elite bosses's cabal dressed up as politicians pin migrants to the implications of unemployment.

Stoking racism can pervert the consciousness of workers, undermining class solidarity. To challenge the dictates of the bosses, workers know that they have to know more than the boss(es) and be prepared for all the dirty tricks the ruling class can use via the state (the courts, police etc) and their mercenary thugs.

Explaining how immigration is one of the tools used by the ruling class in the exploitation of the worker(s) also explains the importance of international worker solidarity.

Graham Drew
ACT

Worth Streaming
Tampa: The Turning Point
Director: Kriv Stenders

Reviewer: Graham Holton

This three-part documentary series *Tampa: The Turning Point* examines the August 2001 crisis in which the Norwegian freighter *MV Tampa* rescued 433 Afghan asylum seekers and five crew from a sinking vessel.

It became a national scandal and opportunity for Prime Minister John Howard to deliver his famous "we will decide who comes here and the manner in which they will come" speech. The speech was mean and dishonest ('we' have always made those decisions), but signalled Howard's disdain for human rights considerations.

The ABC interviewed the survivors, politicians, journalists, and legal experts of the crisis. The *Tampa*'s Norwegian captain, Arne Rinnan, received fourteen awards for his humanitarian actions.

When the *Tampa* requested bringing the rescued people ashore on Christmas Island, it was immediately refused entry to the Australian territory. The asylum seekers wanted safety and a new life. Instead, they quickly became participants in a political game. The series examines the human tragedy, politics and the international consequences for the Howard government on how it dealt with these asylum seekers.

After the 9/11 attacks in New York the Australian government suggested that these Muslim refugees could be terrorists. This was taken up by the press which clamoured for them to be kept out of Australia. For the Australian government it was not a question of humanitarian protection for desperate people. The chosen solution was about sovereignty, border control and political authority.

What began as the *Tampa* Affair soon led to the "Pacific Solution" and the Nauru detention centre. It cost the Australian taxpayer $26 billion and the loss of our international reputation. The cost of processing fewer than 1,700 people between 2001 and 2007 was more than $500,000 per person. Their offshore housing cost $1,830 per person per day, compared to $238 per day for onshore detention.

The Tampa Affair redefined Australia's national identity, electoral politics, and how it treated refugees. The LNP's legacy is its influence on refugee policies in the United Kingdom and the United States, especially under the Trump administration. The UK government's cack-handed attempts to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda can be traced back to subsequent LNP attempts to pass refugees on to Cambodia at vast expense.

The series shows the lack of morality of the Howard government and the political consequences. Australia's hardline response redefined border protection and offshore processing. The *Tampa* became a symbol of poorly treated refugees and international controversy. The LNP government never repented for the shame it brought to Australia.

The series gives a broad perspective of what was experienced and the politics bubbling below the surface of the Howard government. This is an excellent documentary and well worth watching.

Tampa: The Turning Point can be seen on ABCiview ✪

asylum seekers quickly became participants in a political game

Worth Streaming: *East of Eden*

Reviewer: Dennis Broe

***East of Eden* is the work of two remarkable auteurs, the writer Zoe Kazan and the actor Florence Pugh. Steinbeck's sometimes sprawling critique of US values and the US character, and their moulding by a rabid capitalism where money and getting ahead are the primary values, is refined and crystallised in Kazan's adaptation.**

The series begins and ends the US Civil war and World War I, with the Native American genocide in the middle of these. All three victimise the Trask family, reminding us that the great events in US history happen around that history's overarching pattern of bloodshed in a country that, since its inception, has been involved in five declared wars, 36 major conflicts and some 400 foreign military actions.

Steinbeck describes Americans as "a violent people … descended from the restless, the nervous, the criminals, the arguers and brawlers." The series tracks the way this virulent form of US capitalism lays waste the country as a whole and its individuals.

We find two things about Cyrus. His war stories about planning the Union victory at Gettysburg are false and, two, that the inheritance he passes his sons was stolen from the veterans he is supposedly representing in Washington.

Cyrus sends his son Adam to the army to follow in his footsteps. He is roped into a massacre of women and children in the Indian wars. A generation later, Aron, Adam's son, enlists and becomes a victim of World War I.

The series also traces the growing increase in speculation in US society. Adam's other son Caleb, trying to pay back his father's debts, enlists in a war-profiteering scheme of buying beans for five cents, trading on the idea that because of a shortage in the first world war they will soon be worth 10 cents.

Adam's wife Cathy begins as a teenage victim of a teacher's "affection" and learns early that, if she is to survive as an independent woman, she must manipulate the situations men consign her to. She escapes Adam's repressive family trap and slowly becomes a madam in her desire to control her own life. Her new role involves an understanding of and catering to male depravity, practiced especially by the towns and California's state leaders.

The profit motive lays a hold of her as well in her management of the brothel. "Add another show," she barks at one of the women. "Build demand, then raise the prices."

Kate's desire, scheming and duplicity – all fostered by a male world that allows few avenues for female expression – is the heart of the series.

Both book and series are at pains to describe a split in the US character, evidenced by both sets of boys, Cyrus's, and then his son Adam's. Adam and his boy Aron are the innocents, idealists blind to the world around them, including sex and female desire, which they regard as impure.

In this present moment of mass deception when an increasingly virulent empire continues to pretend innocence of its violent motives, Washington is full of Adams and Arons. We had the supposedly "reasonable" neoliberal innocents of the Biden Democrats (actually warmongers), then the unhinged Trump neoconservatives.

The series contrasts the bleak world of a small farm in Connecticut with the verdant fields of California's Salinas Valley. The promise of this new Eden is shattered by a culture of greed and easy money.

Adam's refrigeration scheme to ship produce east ultimately fails and causes him to lose his ill-gotten fortune.

Lee, the Chinese philosopher posing as nursemaid and cook, and subject to extreme racism, sees his plan to open up a bookstore in San Francisco's Chinatown flounder as he finds his countrymen herded into a segregated space.

Cathy/Kate's dream of having her own business equally is destroyed by the actions necessary for her as a woman to achieve it.

The Salinas Valley Eden, in the end, is a rotten garden, much the way modern day Americans are experiencing the once verdant promise of the country with nearly 50 per cent of working people living below, near or just above the poverty level, and home ownership now realised and realisable by only a third of those in their twenties and thirties.

Morning Star (edited for space)

East of Eden is available to watch on Netflix ✪

Lula's historic victory repels fascism

Portal Vermelho

The reelection of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is, above all, a victory for the Brazilian people, with the youth playing a prominent role over the far-right forces that tried to stifle their hopes, curtail their rights, and subordinate the country to the greed of US imperialism. It affirms a Brazil moving toward national development, with social inclusion, sovereignty, democratic freedoms, and rights for the people.

This great achievement by the Brazilian people transcends the country's borders. Amid the international rise of the far right, Lula's victory is being celebrated by democratic, popular, and progressive forces from West to East.

It is especially significant for the peoples and countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in the face of the United States' neocolonial offensive in the region. Donald Trump's neofascist government, which brazenly backed Flávio Bolsonaro, suffered a major defeat.

The turnaround began with young people's response to the adverse first-round result. The National Union of Students (UNE) drew up a nationwide mobilisation calendar for the campaign Students with Lula: in the Streets and Online. The Socialist Youth Union (UJS) played a key role in bringing this agenda to fruition, alongside Free Homeland Youth (JPL).

It was the spark that set off one of the largest popular demonstrations across the country since the return to democracy. The protests grew enormously as millions of ordinary people enthusiastically joined in, alongside the trade union federations, social movements as a whole, artists, and intellectuals.

The digital battle was also decisive. Federal Deputy André Janones created the Lula's Armychannel on WhatsApp, which surpassed ten million followers and became a hub for distributing videos, audio messages, and guidance for mass actions.

Other influential voices joined in, and millions more, who had not previously been active online, entered the internet arena. The campaign faced illegal and criminal acts by Meta – the parent company of WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook – which restricted content about Lula and favoured the far-right candidate.

President Lula, at 80 years of age, was the great leader and decisive factor in this victory for the nation, the people, the youth, and the working class. This was due to a combination of qualities: his stature as a statesman; the trust he enjoys among the people; the political courage he once again showed in confronting fascism; his deep patriotism in rejecting Trump's moves; his ability to unite broad forces; the drive to carry out a diverse and bold agenda across the country; and his ability to respond to the new demands of the class struggle, as he showed in the runoff by spreading messages on social media.

Concretely, when Lula realised that the vast majority of the ruling classes had aligned themselves with the far right, he broke through the encirclement by deepening his commitment to defending the rights of the Brazilian people, the country's sovereignty, and democracy.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Photo: Lula Oficial – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 4.0)

This victory also reflects the role played by Vice President Geraldo Alckmin. He was tasked with broadening the dialogue beyond the forces already in Lula's camp, mobilising political leaders, mayors, businesspeople, religious representatives, and figures aligned with other political currents – from the centre and centre-right to the right.

Together, the two fronts – the streets and social media – working in concert and coordinated with millions of activists and supporters, and grounded in the grassroots activism and leadership of progressive parties, confronted the power of the far-right alliance and much of the right, as well as the shameful bias of the powerful media monopolies. They exposed Flávio Bolsonaro and did what had seemed impossible. They turned the election around and reelected President Lula.

The Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), its activist base, and its leaders were on the front lines of this confrontation, which will shape the country's present and immediate future.

Lula's fourth presidential term will have historic significance. It is born out of one of the greatest political confrontations in the history of the Republic. It emerges from the ballot box committed to an ambitious program: to kick-start sovereign development, including reindustrialisation on new technological foundations that will create better jobs, with the wealth generated channelled into a new generation of rights for the people and greater recognition for work. It will deepen democracy and guarantee national sovereignty.

To advance this agenda, Lula will need to build a broad alliance in support of his government and continue to draw strength from popular support in the streets and online. The task will be even more challenging given the advance of the right and far right, reflected in the new composition of the National Congress and the election of governors from this political camp in key states.

The victory thus opens a new phase of challenges, in which the strength secured at the ballot box must be turned into concrete advances for the country and the Brazilian people.

A powerful far-right wave, propelled by Trump, had been surging forward, convinced it was unbeatable as it swept from the Caribbean to South America. The White House was already celebrating Brazil as its next conquest.

But the Brazilian people, with the youth as the driving force, spoke out loud and clear: Not here! No one will fly a foreign flag in place of our green-and-yellow; no one will plunder our wealth; no one will take away our hard-won rights; no one will bury the democracy we fought so hard – and at the cost of so many lives – to win; we will not accept a return to the horrific, tragic past of fascism and the Bolsonaros; we will not accept anyone killing our plans and dreams of a better life!

And so, in pursuit of a promising and thriving future for Brazil and its people, the heroic, epic journey of the runoff secured President Lula's fourth term.

After all, now is the time to celebrate this historic achievement by the Brazilian people!

Communist Party of Brazil

Analysis: A program for working people

André Cintra and Cezar Xavier

In his victory speech in São Paulo, Lula credited voters rather than himself and his running mate, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin. "It wasn't Alckmin and me who won this election," he said. "It was decency, patriotism, democracy, and the future you want for your children."

Lula laid out an agenda aimed squarely at working families: full-day public schooling for every child through high school; expansion of a program that pays low-income teenagers to stay in school, along with a new version for college students; continued growth of Brazil's universal public health system, including expanded cancer treatment; and stronger policies for older people and women.

He also pledged a bigger federal role in fighting crime. "For working people, we will provide protection," he said. "For criminals, we will provide prison."

Lula then called for regulating the tech giants. "We cannot have monstrously large companies, earning billions and billions, paying no taxes to this country and trying to steer the result of our elections," Lula said. He also pushed for technological independence: "I don't want to depend on Chinese or American artificial intelligence. I want to create a Brazilian one."

He closed on a note of unity. "No one is obliged to like the president-elect," he said, "but he was elected to govern for everyone."

Alckmin, a former center-right governor who helped bring moderates and business leaders into Lula's coalition, turned to the president and said, "For the second time, you have saved Brazilian democracy."

People's World (edited for space)

an agenda aimed squarely at working families

China's Global Governance Initiative: A Lao perspective

The international community is undergoing profound transformation. Geopolitical competition is intensifying, development disparities remain persistent, technological change is accelerating, and transnational challenges increasingly extend beyond the capacity of individual countries.

Proposed by President Xi Jinping in September 2025, the Global Governance Initiative (GGI) represents a further development in China's broader approach to international cooperation, following the earlier Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).

While these initiatives focus on development, security, and exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations, the GGI addresses the broader question of how international cooperation and multilateral institutions can adapt to contemporary challenges and how developing countries can engage more actively in that process.

After its first year, the significance of the GGI depends not only on the principles it articulates, but also on how those principles are translated into cooperation, and practical outcomes.

PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE

The GGI is built around five core principles: sovereign equality, international rule of law, multilateralism,the people-centred approach, and taking real actions. Together, these principles provide a framework for addressing representation, inclusion, fairness and effectiveness in global governance.

Sovereign equality emphasises the equal rights of countries, regardless of their size or level of development, to engage in international affairs. International rule of law places the UN Charter and international law at the centre of international relations. Multilateralism stresses consultation, cooperation and the role of the United Nations.

The people-centred approach connects international cooperation with development and people's livelihoods, while 'taking real actions' emphasises implementation and tangible outcomes. China presents these principles as a response to what it describes as a growing "governance deficit" in an international environment marked by unilateralism, polarisation and increasingly complex global challenges.

Many of these principles, including sovereign equality, international law and multilateralism, are already embedded in the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The key question is how the GGI can contribute to improving the implementation, representation and effectiveness of existing multilateral arrangements. This does not necessarily require replacing established institutions. Its potential contribution may instead lie in strengthening existing mechanisms and developing additional forms of cooperation.

One year on, the GGI has attracted considerable international engagement. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, nearly 160 countries and international organisations have expressed support or positive responses to the initiative, while more than 60 countries have joined the Group of Friends of Global Governance. Groups have been established in New York, Geneva, and Vienna, creating additional platforms for discussion within established multilateral settings.

These figures indicate substantial international interest. Countries engage with the GGI from different political, economic and developmental perspectives. This diversity makes continued consultation important, particularly if the initiative is to provide space for countries with different interests and priorities to identify areas of common ground.

China has also promoted discussion of global governance through platforms such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), with an emphasis on strengthening the voice and role of Global South countries. At the same time, the relationship between the GGI and established multilateral institutions, particularly the United Nations, will remain an important consideration as the initiative develops. China has emphasised that the GGI upholds the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and seeks to strengthen the role of the United Nations.

The first year has also seen efforts to translate the GGI's principles into practical mechanisms. China has highlighted cooperation in areas including international mediation, data and information, and artificial intelligence, alongside the establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed), the World Data Organization and the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO).

The GGI is also becoming part of China's broader policy planning. The 2026 Government Work Report reaffirmed China's pursuit of the GGI and its role in the reform and development of the global governance system. The 15th Five-Year Plan covers the period from 2026 to 2030, providing a longer-term policy framework within which the initiative can develop from guiding principles into sustained programs, institutional cooperation and practical outcomes.

WHY THE GGI MATTERS TO LAOS

The GGI resonates with several long-standing elements of Lao foreign-policy thinking, including sovereign equality, respect for the UN Charter and international law, multilateralism, peaceful cooperation, and attention to the development interests of developing countries.

The country has expressed support for China's four major global initiatives. During President Thongloun Sisoulith's visit to China in 2025, he said that the Lao side "fully supports" the GGI and expressed readiness to strengthen coordination and cooperation with China on international affairs.

Such engagement extends beyond the bilateral relationship. As an ASEAN Member State and developing country, the Laos' perspective places particular importance on an international system that enables smaller states to participate effectively, gives due attention to development priorities, and promotes consultation and inclusiveness.

This perspective also reflects the broader interests of developing countries in ensuring that international institutions take account of diverse national circumstances. Active engagement in multilateral institutions and cooperation mechanisms can provide smaller states with opportunities to bring their experiences and priorities into wider discussions.

Students wash hands before a meal. Had Ane Primary School of Oudomxay Province, Lao. Photo: Bart Verweij / World Bank – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

LINKING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE WITH DEVELOPMENT

The connection between global governance and development is particularly evident in the building of an 'All-Weather Laos-China Community with a Shared Future for the New Era' and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). These frameworks have provided practical platforms for connectivity, trade, investment, rural development and people-to-people exchanges. The Laos-China Railway, for example, demonstrates how national infrastructure can become part of wider regional economic networks.

Improved connectivity can create opportunities for trade, tourism, logistics and investment, while its longer-term contribution depends on whether these opportunities translate into sustainable and inclusive development. This reflects the people-centred dimension of the GGI: international cooperation gains greater significance when it generates tangible benefits for communities and supports national development priorities.

Linking them with regional and international cooperation provides a practical avenue for advancing development objectives while contributing to broader discussions on how international cooperation can better respond to the needs of developing countries.

MULTILATERALISM

Laos upholds multilateralism, respecting the Charter of the United Nations (UN), the sovereign equality of all states, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Under the current complex and fast-changing international situation, multilateral cooperation and global governance are increasingly important for upholding the international system with the UN at its core, underpinned by international law and the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the UN Charter, ensuring that all countries can participate fairly in addressing global challenges.

For small and developing countries, multilateralism provides an important platform to strengthen their international positions, express their views, and participate in shaping the global agenda. Common rules and mechanisms also help reduce the risks of unilateral actions and promote predictable, transparent, and mutually beneficial international relations.

In this context, the GGI provides a framework for dialogue and cooperation that emphasises respect for international principles, the strengthening of multilateral institutions, and greater representation of developing countries in global affairs. For Laos the initiative offers opportunities to identify areas of cooperation consistent with national interests. Cooperation with China and other partners also contributes to mutual understanding and the promotion of shared interests.

At the regional level, ASEAN is a key mechanism for Laos to coordinate positions with Member States, promote ASEAN centrality, and safeguard shared interests. Through ASEAN and other multilateral frameworks, Laos can contribute to addressing regional challenges and promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development.

Overall, multilateralism is both a key principle of Laos' foreign policy and a practical means of safeguarding national interests and strengthening its international role.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A NEW AREA FOR LAO ENGAGEMENT

Laos was among the 29 founding members of WAICO.

Laos' engagement in emerging AI governance mechanisms further illustrates how countries with smaller digital economies can contribute perspectives to discussions on emerging international norms rather than simply adapting to rules developed elsewhere.

Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR

The Laos' perspective places particular importance on an international system that enables smaller states to participate effectively, and promotes consultation and inclusiveness.

UN 'alarmed' after Hebron attack

The UN said it was "extremely alarmed" by intensifying violence in the occupied West Bank, as Israel moved to seal off the territory following a deadly attack on its soldiers in Hebron.

Two Israeli soldiers were killed and at least five injured when gunmen opened fire near a military checkpoint outside the city, according to news reports. The two Palestinian attackers were also killed.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered Hebron sealed, pledged house-to-house raids and home demolitions, and reportedly threatened a wider assault on a scale not seen since the Six-Day War. It is the fourth time in a month that Israel has imposed restrictions across the territory.

Speaking in New York, UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said Secretary-General António Guterres was deeply concerned by the closures and by reports of home demolitions and possible displacement in Hebron.

"Those closures severely restrict Palestinians' freedom of movement, access to basic services and livelihoods," he said.

SETTLER VIOLENCE

Guterres condemned "the violence caused by record numbers of attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in 2026," recalling Israel's obligation as the occupying power "to protect the Palestinian population from such attacks and to hold perpetrators to account."

Mayy El Sheikh, spokesperson for the UN human rights office (OHCHR) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said the lockdown was "yet another episode in a never-ending stream of suffocating measures making life more and more unbearable for Palestinians."

"It follows a pattern of collective punishment whenever Palestinians commit acts of violence against Israeli settlers or soldiers," she said, noting that similar incidents had previously brought lockdowns, intensified raids and arbitrary detentions.

Hebron's entrances and exits were closed after the attack, she said, and the Ibrahimi Mosque was shut, leaving worshippers unable to perform Friday prayers.

The closure comes at the height of the olive harvest.

"Israeli movement restrictions are already preventing thousands of Palestinian farmers from reaching their olives for the harvest," El Sheikh said. "This is bound to have devastating effects on the season."

OHCHR has documented more than 160 settler attacks in the first two weeks of October alone, involving live ammunition, arson, crop theft and damage to olive groves.

Settlers also targeted European Union diplomats, and a Washington Post photojournalist was badly assaulted a week ago by masked settlers while covering the harvest near Ramallah.

Guterres also remained deeply concerned about civilian deaths in Gaza, including children, and severe aid restrictions ahead of winter.

He called on all parties "to immediately cease all acts of violence, to exercise restraint and refrain from action that could further inflame tensions".

United Nations

A mother and her children go through their belongings after a room in their home was burned in a settler attack in southern Hebron, West Bank, July 2025. Photo: UNICEF/Rawan Eleyan

Global Briefs

GHANA: Ghana's President John Mahama said that Africa must stop supplying foreign industries while importing products made from its own resources. Ghana plans to stop exporting unprocessed mineral ores by 2030, build domestic industries and retain more of its resource wealth. Other countries across Africa are introducing similar measures to encourage domestic processing and create jobs. President Mahama delivered a similar message at the UN General Assembly, warning that Western demand for minerals needed for the green-energy transition must benefit Africans. He also said that Africa's critical mineral extraction must not repeat colonial-era exploitation, calling for local processing to create jobs and retain more value on the continent.

SERBIA: Early elections to the National Assembly took place on 25 October. The Electoral Commission registered nearly six and a half million voters who would elect 250 lawmakers to serve four-year terms. There were 18 electoral lists. The main contenders were the United Serbia list of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party led by Aleksandar Vučić , who stepped down as the country's president in September, and the Student List coalition. The Student List coalition grew out of a protest movement following the tragic accident in Novi Sad in November 2024, when 16 people died when a concrete canopy at the train station collapsed. Citing preliminary results of the election, Vučić acknowledged that the Student List defeated his party.

BULGARIA: Bulgaria's presidential election on 25 October followed a campaign that focused on growing economic hardship and drone attacks on Black Sea shipping. President Diana Iotova and former caretaker Prime Minister Andrey Gyurov were leading a field of 27 candidates in the polls. The two leading candidates differ on the war in Ukraine, with Gyurov backed by pro-Western parties. He has supported Ukraine and signed a security cooperation agreement with the country during his time as premier. "I want Bulgaria to have a voice of its own in Europe, a reliable NATO ally that defends its interests through preparedness, strong diplomacy and a clear position", he said at a rally. Iotova, however, called for a diplomatic end to the war. "My opponents argue that there must be a war of attrition. The truth is, we are all the ones who are most exhausted," she said. Bulgarian society is divided – parliamentary parties are mainly pro-western, while there are wide-spread pro-Russian sentiments based on traditional and historical ties with Russia.

US: Secretary of State Marco Rubio has urged Cubans to secretly work with the CIA to topple their government. His appeal followed president Trump's threat to send warships to Cuba after the Iran war.

POLAND: Thousands of people protested in more than 20 cities and towns across Poland calling for access to free and legal abortion services. Demonstrators gathered on the sixth anniversary of a near-total abortion ban imposed by Poland's highest court. Currently, abortion is only legal in Poland when pregnancy results from a criminal act like rape or incest, or when it threatens the life or health of the mother.

ALBANIA: Albania has experienced months of anti-government demonstrations which have escalated into violent clashes between protesters and security forces. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama announced plans to fine participants in violent demonstrations, as the protesters continue to call for improved economic and social conditions and the resignation of the Prime Minister. The new legislation would also authorise police to restrict gatherings when there is a risk of violence.

Something to say?

Write to the Editor!

editor@cpa.org.au

Burkina Faso pursues food sovereignty

Pavan Kulkarni

Prioritising food self-sufficiency as a central plank in its pursuit of sovereignty, the policies of the Ibrahim Traoré-led government have increased Burkina Faso's cereal production to meet 124% of the national need, before launching an even more ambitious plan for 2026-28.

Cereal production in Burkina Faso has risen 53% to a record high under the government of Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who has made food self-sufficiency an urgent priority since coming to power.

The country has produced 124% of national cereal needs, the agricultural minister, Commander Ismaël Sombié, said this October at the 3rd edition of the National Days of Patriotic Engagement and Citizen Participation (JEPPC).

Paddy rice production for the first time exceeded a million tons in 2025, while maize production reached well over 2,68 million tons.

The total production of over seven million tons is a historic high. It was only 4.66 million tons in 2021-22. It was a tumultuous period. Amid mass protests calling for the expulsion of the troops of Burkina Faso's former coloniser, France, the regime of President Roch Marc Kaboré, widely perceived in the country as a French puppet, was ousted in a coup.

However, the new military government replacing this regime, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo, dragged its feet on meeting protesters' demands for the expulsion of French troops. Another coup followed that September, bringing Captain Ibrahim Traoré to power.

In less than half a year after taking power, Traoré expelled the French, asserting Burkina Faso's sovereignty. His government, backed by the anti-France protest movement, trade unions, and progressive sections of civil society, has repeatedly insisted that sovereignty cannot be consolidated without reducing the country's dependence on imports for basic food needs.

With domestic agro-pastoral potential undeveloped, Burkina Faso was spending about 148.5 billion CFA francs (AU $36 mil) on rice and wheat imports in 2022, while almost a fifth of the country's population remained undernourished.

Soon after swearing in as transitional president that October, Traoré launched the Presidential Initiative for Agricultural Production (2023-2024), which later became part of the larger, more ambitious 2023-2025 Agro-Pastoral and Fisheries Offensive (OAPH), launched in September 2023.

Spending 273.99 billion CFA francs (AU$66mil) on this initiative, the state developed 11,774 hectares of irrigated areas and 41,275 hectares of lowland areas, making them available to farmers.

It invested in water management, installing 485 high-yield boreholes. It increased mechanisation, including by deploying 1,261 tractors. And through this initiative, the state supplied inputs, including 160,560 tons of mineral fertilizer, to farmers and created 418 new storage facilities.

Photo: New Direction Africa/X

CONCRETE IMPACT

The 1,008,737 tons of rice produced in 2025 is 101% of the target set under the OAPH. For maize, the 2,686,531 tons produced amounted to 134% of the target achieved.

Presenting these figures to the Council of Ministers, Amos Kiénou, OAPH's executive secretary, said that these gains have had a "concrete impact" on the consumer plate.

A bag of maize, for example, "used to cost between 35,000 and 40,000 CFA francs" during lean seasons before this campaign by Traoré's government, he said. "Today ... a bag does not exceed 20,000 CFA francs," even as the government has set minimum prices of several crops to ensure that farmers are not forced to sell at a loss.

Beyond these carbohydrate sources, the government has also prioritised greater protein availability for the population. Against OAPH's poultry target of 18,000,000 chickens, 18,262,480 were counted. Fish production rose from 30,574 tons to 58,476 tons during this offensive, although it remained below the target. OAPH also produced 51,818 tons of potatoes and renewed 3,170 hectares of mango orchards.

This campaign aimed at achieving food self-sufficiency has generated 91,027 jobs, helping women and Internally Displaced persons. During this OAPH, agricultural GDP rose by an average of over 12% annually, while household incomes grew by 4.3%.

With this success to show, the government launched an even more ambitious Agropastoral, Hydraulic and Fisheries Offensive 2026-2028 in late July this year.

State funding of 839.99 billion CFA francs (AU$2 bn) is expected to finance this new offensive, which is to develop another 50,000 hectares of irrigated areas and 100,000 hectares of lowlands.

Plantain, sunflower, pineapple, rabbit, oil palm, and cocoa are included as the six emerging sectors in the 2026-2028 offensive. The gains made in maize, potato, mango, livestock-meat, fish, and poultry are to be consolidated in this new phase, while rice, milk, soybeans, sesame, peanuts, wheat, cassava, and shea fall under priority sectors.

The plan also targets the building of 418 more storage facilities, including 11 cold rooms and 63 processing units.

Agriculture minister Sombié said the government's aim is to develop domestic capacity across the entire agricultural value chain – from cultivation to processing to final consumption – to consolidate Burkina Faso's sovereignty.

Breakthrough News

South Australia's communists are celebrating the October Revolution and another year of struggle of the Communist movement locally and internationally!

When: Saturday November 7th, 6-10 pm.
Where: Fidel's, 66 Wattle Avenue, Royal Park, South Australia.
Entrance by donation, suggested $10 unwaged, $20 waged
Limited entry, RSVP essential!
RSVP: sa@cpa.org.au

Irish unions strike

Graham Holton

The Irish Republic has experienced a major resurgence of public-sector industrial action following the breakdown of negotiations. Hundreds of thousands of workers have mobilised, demanding pay increases to address the erosion of purchasing power due to inflation, and protection during a new agreement negotiation. Formal negotiations have begun at Ireland's Workplace Relations Commission.

The planned 21 October strike was suspended after the government agreed to formal pay negotiations, but if union mandates for industrial action and work-to-rule fail, further industrial action is likely. A leading trade unionist said that Ireland is: "a different country now than we were on 13 October." This follows the impact of the public sector general strike.

The strike demonstrates the power of coordinated union action of teachers, healthcare workers, and civil servants acting together. More than 300,000 nurses, doctors, teachers, civil servants, and other public-sector employees went on strike. Union action closed schools, and led to the cancellation of hospital appointments and the disruption of court services.

The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation is focusing on core shift responsibilities. "Members will not work any additional unpaid hours. They will not attend non-clinical meetings, except where attendance is strictly necessary for direct patient care. They will also not co-operate with audits, information requests, or reporting functions that are not directly related to immediate patient care." Members will not provide unscheduled cover for colleagues, nor participate in training.

The nationwide public-sector strike was described by RTÉ (Ireland's National Television and Radio Broadcaster) as Ireland's largest strike in nearly twenty years.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Public Services Committee agreed to suspend a further strike after the government agreed to appoint an independent third party to help establish a basis for formal negotiations. Meanwhile work-to-rule action continues.

SIPTU, one of Ireland's largest unions, represents workers across healthcare, local government and other services. More than 60,000 members took part in the union action. Fórsa, a major public-service union that represents civil servants, local authority employees, and education workers is playing a central role in coordinating the pay dispute.

The INTO, Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) and Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) have mobilised teachers in the public-sector pay dispute. They are working to work-to-rule and withdrawing from additional duties.

The government allocated €1.2 billion (AU$2 bn) in its Budget 2027 for public-service pay, but this has not resolved the pay dispute. Collective action has brought the government to the negotiating table, but if negotiations fall short, unions are ready for more coordinated action.

Xi calls for new achievements on new Long March

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for new achievements on the new Long March as China commemorates the 90th anniversary of the victory of the Red Army's Long March.

"Only by remembering history can we create a brighter future," said Xi, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, when addressing a gathering held in Beijing to mark the anniversary.

Under Xi's proposal, all participants stood up and observed a moment of silence for the revolutionary heroes who gave their lives during the Long March and in revolutionary struggles across China.

From October 1934 to October 1936, the Red Army marched through more than 10,000 kilometres during the Long March, opening up a new chapter in the Chinese revolution, Xi said.

"This earth-shattering revolutionary feat holds great significance in the history of our Party, country, and military, and has a profound impact on our path toward the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," he noted.

Xi stressed that the Party's right leadership and the establishment of Mao Zedong's core position were decisive for the victory of the Red Army's Long March.

The Party and the Red Army relied on firm conviction, Xi said, adding that troops with noble ideals and firm beliefs are invincible.

Xi emphasised the importance of integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities in addressing the country's issues and problems.

He further underscored that the people will always be the source of strength and a strong support for the Party and the people's armed forces.

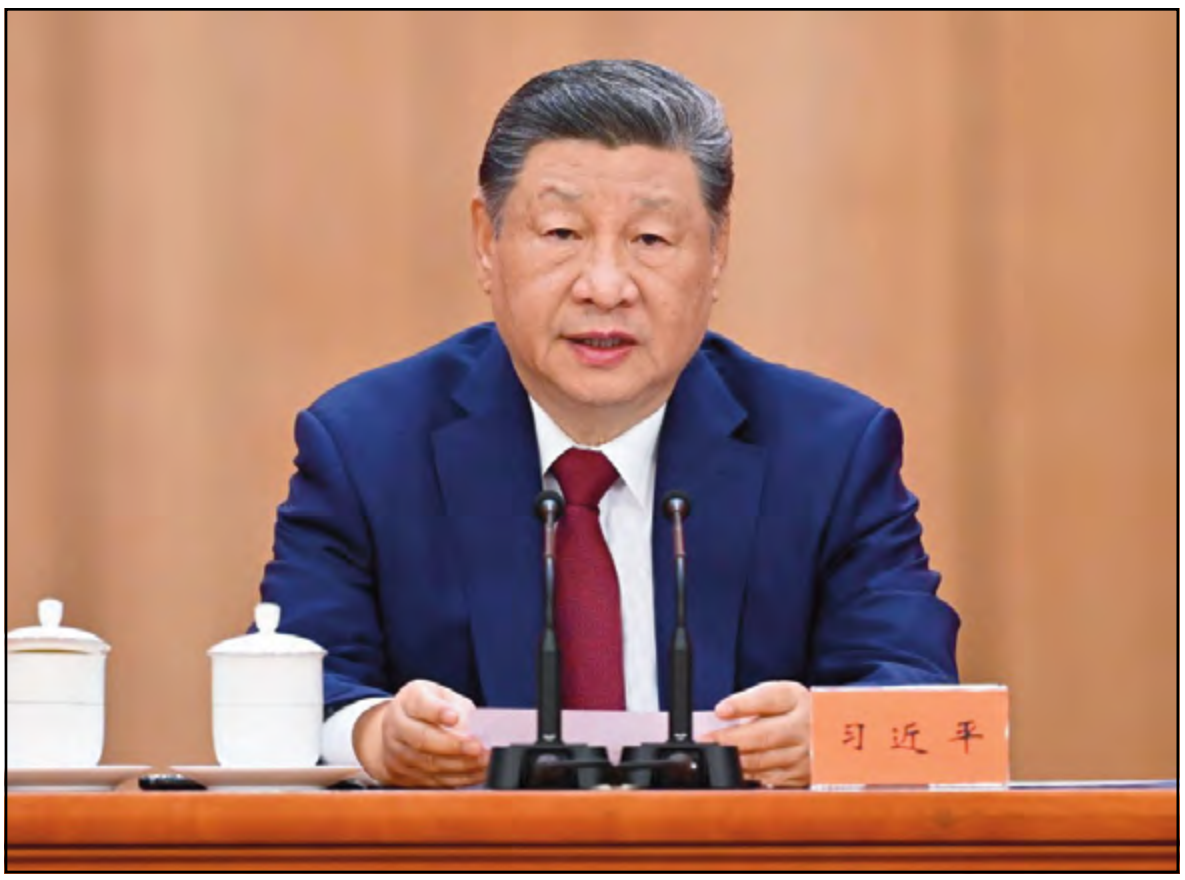
Xi said the great spirit of the Long March demonstrates the power of loyalty, truth, justice and unity. "It will always be a precious treasure and a powerful driving force inspiring us to overcome difficulties and forge ahead courageously."

He said the road of the Long March continues to extend: "On our new journey, we are now committed to realising the Second Centenary Goal of building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernisation."

To forge ahead on the new Long March, Xi said, it is imperative to stay committed to the Party's ideals, convictions and purpose and rely closely on the people to create new achievements.

He underscored the need to unswervingly advance high-quality development and promote common prosperity for all.

Xinhua



Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers an important speech during a gathering commemorating the 90th anniversary of the victory of the Red Army's Long March held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, 22 October 2026. Photo: Xinhua

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Half the Sky

What is 'V-coding'?

Lexi Goff

Prison rape, like all forms of violent sexual assault, is rarely talked about. More often than not people would hear it as a joke, a way to point broadly at the "consequences" for men who go to prison (e.g. "Dropping the soap"). It is supposed to be seen as a means of keeping someone in line, the threat of emasculation and violence briefly hinted at to scare a man into doing whatever he can to avoid it.

There isn't space here for a long essay on gendered violence and prison rape, but there is a practice that I'd like to highlight that most people probably aren't aware of: V-coding.

V-coding is the practice of putting trans women in cells with violent men with the intent that it will "calm him down." Of course, what is meant by this is that the man who would normally be violent to the general population in the prison will instead turn that violence to their cellmate. The unspoken understanding that the guards will turn a blind eye to the rape and violence done to the woman he now shares a cell with, in exchange for the "temperature being lowered" in the prison otherwise.

Such a practice is often informally considered as part of the sentence of trans women. I remember being told early in my transition that my fears of being placed in a men's prison were actually a good thing, "don't do the crime if you can't take the consequences." The 'consequences' are alluded to vaguely because what's really being said is that people in prison, particularly trans women, deserve the violence, trauma, disablement, or death that comes from their dehumanisation.

In the United States, trans women in men's prisons are 13 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than male prisoners. Documented evidence of this practice in Australia is not as easy to come by as it is in the United States, but it has been known to occur.

In Western Australia earlier this year, a trans prisoner pursued an Equal Opportunities complaint and put in a request for a transfer to a women's prison while it was being decided on safety grounds. She had raised serious wellbeing concerns throughout her sentence, reporting that she had experienced repeated assault.

The state government intervened on this transfer lodging a case to block the order and keep her in the male prison. This decision to intervene was made despite her gender being legally recognised by the state and the transfer already being underway. Her lawyers argued that she was vulnerable and at risk saying, "Horrible violence has been inflicted on her in a male prison by men, and that will stop if she is transferred."

The state dismissed the urgency in removing her from the facility suggesting that "compensation payments" were an adequate remedy to address instances of serious harm and abuse if they have occurred. In September the state government won the case to block the transfer meaning that she will remain in the male prison while the complaint is heard.

Some might think that violence is justified when it is against criminals, but this is wrong. It ignores the fact that people are still people even if they're in a prison system. Trans women in prisons should not be seen as objects to throw at violent offenders, they are people and human rights still apply. Regardless of the crime they committed, to permit the raping of an individual, to use them as a lightning rod for violence, is a violation of such rights.

Women's rights are human rights.

A Gaza girl's question to the world

Hani al-Salmy

This is the story of Alma Younis, a little girl who grew up during the war before she learned to write her own name.

My mother told me I was three years old when the war began. Now I am six. My name is Alma Younis, and I have spent half my life learning things my mother never wanted me to learn.

I learned to tell the sound of an airplane from the sound of an explosion. I learned to read my father's face to know whether he had found something for us to eat or had returned empty-handed. I learned to keep my questions to myself so I would not make my mother sadder, to ask for water in a quiet voice, and to fall asleep quickly whenever someone told us we had to leave.

There is one thing I still have not learned: why did they close the windows?

The words I hear most often from my mother and father during the war are: "There isn't any."

There is no bread, no water, no milk. There are no clean clothes. There is no school like the schools children see in pictures. And there is nowhere for us to go.

At first, I thought the words "There isn't any" applied only to the things we asked for. When I asked for a piece of candy, my mother would say, "There isn't any." When I asked for another doll after losing mine during our displacement, my father would say, "There isn't any."

Sometimes I ask my mother, "When will we have everything again?"

She answers, "Tomorrow, God willing."

I love the word tomorrow, although I have begun to suspect it is a trickster. Tomorrow comes every day, but it never brings what my mother promised. It does not bring back my doll or my bed. It does not turn our tent into a home, and it does not stop the sounds that make my heart jump.

I was three when the war began, so I do not remember our home the way my parents do. Whenever they try to describe it, I feel as though I am listening to a story about a place where I once lived without knowing that I was living there. My father says there was a large window in our house through which the morning light entered, and my mother would open it to let in fresh air. My mother says I loved standing beside it, watching the children in the street and waving to them.

I try to imagine myself there, a little girl standing in front of a window, but the picture in my mind is never complete. I do not know the colour of the curtains or the shape of the glass, or whether the window looked out onto a tree or the neighbours' house. Sometimes I wonder whether I have truly forgotten these things, or whether I simply never had enough time to preserve them in my memory.

In the displacement camp, our lives have become too small to hold many memories. Our tent is fabric stretched over poles, and its floor knows no difference between the earth we play on and the earth we sleep on.

When it rains, we watch the water search for a way to reach our bedding. When the sun grows fierce, the air inside becomes so hot that it feels as though someone has shut us inside a giant oven. At night, the cold slips through the gaps, and the fabric moves in the wind. Sometimes we think the tent is trying to carry us away to somewhere else.

We have been displaced more than once. I no longer know how many places we have left behind, but I know that each time, my mother tries to gather our lives into a few bags. She stacks our clothes, searches for my father's papers, collects whatever utensils we have left, and then turns to make sure I am holding one of my sisters' hands. I ask whether we will return that evening, and she says, "We'll see."

A Palestinian girl in Gaza. Photo: Mahmoud Ajjour – *Palestine Chronicle*

On my first day of school, I woke up early. I did not have a new school uniform or a bag like the ones children carry in advertisements. I put on the clothes I had, packed a notebook and a pencil, and left feeling that I was going somewhere important. As my mother straightened my collar, she said, "Be careful, sweetheart. Listen to your teacher, behave well, and study hard, Alma." I nodded seriously, as though she had sent me on a mission to save the world.

I imagined a school with colourful walls, a spacious playground, and a bell that announced the beginning and end of every lesson. I imagined sitting beside a new girl and sharing our coloured pencils while our teacher wrote our names on the board. But my school was a tent in the displacement camp, only a few steps away from our own.

When I arrived, I found children sitting on scattered chairs, while others sat on the ground. Some carried old notebooks. Some wrote on scraps of paper they had collected from different places. Others had come without pencils. Our teacher was trying to turn fabric into a place for learning, noise into quiet, and fear into a small opportunity for us to be children again.

I sat near her and opened my notebook. Slowly, I wrote my name: ALMA. I looked at the letters and felt proud. I wanted to write my parents' names next, and then the name of the place they had told me about. But I did not know how to write the name of a home whose address I did not know, or whether that home still existed.

I raised my head, searching for a window. There was none. I looked at the fabric surrounding us, then at the light slipping through an opening at the edge of the tent.

"Why did they close the windows?" I asked my teacher.

She stopped writing, and the children sitting nearby looked at me.

"Which windows, Alma?" she asked.

"The school windows," I said. "I want to see the street and know whether the sun has risen. I want to see the children playing outside. And I want to see our house, even if it is far away."

My teacher did not answer immediately. She looked at my face, then toward the opening in the tent.

Finally, she said, "Schools used to have windows, sweetheart. They had playgrounds, too."

"What happened to them?" I asked.

"The war changed many things," she replied.

My name is Alma Younis. I was three when the war began, and now I am six. I do not remember everything, but I remember that I was a child and that I wanted a window.

Palestine Chronicle

our tent is fabric,
and its floor knows no difference
between the earth we play on
and the earth we sleep on

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