



# THE SUN WILL SHINE, THE WIND WILL BLOW

Anna Pha

**Australia is on the brink of a total collapse of its domestic energy market amid a crisis that has been decades in the making. If the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) had not stepped in last week and suspended the market, the whole of the east coast of Australia and South Australia would have faced power outages.**

The capitalist myth that private sector markets are more efficient and cheaper has been exploded once and for all. They are not. When they fail governments have to step in and pick up the pieces. It is criminal that Australia with its vast land mass and surrounded by oceans is dependent on fossil fuels for energy. It is also criminal that Australia, the largest liquid natural gas exporter in the world faces gas shortages.

Workers and their families, already struggling to meet basics in a cost-of-living crisis, are about to be slam-dunked by a large hike in gas and electricity prices in July. A colder than average winter is compounding the situation.

Stock markets are falling and fears of an impending global economic crisis are well justified. All the ingredients are there.

Prices continue their upward trend. Rising interest rates are putting stress on mortgagees and landlords paying off loans are set to recoup the cost of higher rates. Supply chains are jammed creating shortages and the lifting of mandatory masks and other safety measures have seen a surge in COVID cases resulting in labour shortages.

Energy is integral to every aspect of life whether it be households or businesses. The price hikes will feed inflation as businesses seek to restore their profits or even, in the case of some small businesses, become economically unviable.

With or without sanctions on Russia and global gas shortages, there would have been a crisis at some point in time. The domestic factors are overriding. The causes of the present energy crisis are multi-faceted:

**Failure to carry out just transition** with continuing heavy and unnecessary reliance on dirty, greenhouse gas emitting fossil fuels, with governments that have not lost their thirst for dirty political donations at the expense of the needs of people and the planet.

**Privatisation of power generation** began under the Kennett Coalition government in Victoria in the early 1990s. Privately-owned, for-profit generators add a layer of profits to costs for consumers. Energy is an essential service which has been commodified with private profit, not people's needs the primary driving force in its generation, distribution and sale.



Cape Grim Tasmania. Photo: Ian Cochrane – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

**Lack of planning** by governments with "free markets" chasing biggest profits, and anarchic operation of plants opening and closing of generators regardless of domestic needs.

**Coalition government as a roadblock** to investment in renewable wind farms and storage.

**Ongoing expansion of coal and gas mining** and the former Coalition government's "gas-led" road to reducing greenhouse gas emissions instead of government investment in renewables, and as if gas was not an emitter.

**Failure to invest in renewables** by the federal and most state governments despite the urgent need and them being cheaper.

**Coal-fired power station outages** with gouging of the system by creating artificial shortages that drive up prices even higher. Outages are also occurring because the power stations should have been closed.

**Outdated transmission infrastructure** unfit for purpose. Lines and poles are not being properly maintained as private companies cut staff and casualise their workforces.

**Renewable Energy Target** was watered down by the Abbott-led Coalition government.

**Promotion of gas exports** with no provisions to meet domestic needs, except for Western Australia (WA) where gas companies are obliged to reserve seventeen per cent of production for the domestic market. Australia is the largest gas exporter in the world, with private corporations such as Santos and Chevron profiteering from global shortages. Domestic pricing is pegged to the international market.

**Small retailers priced out of the market** as they could not pass on the full cost of wholesale prices to consumers.

## COAL KEEPER

What is to be done? The Energy Security Board in a draft paper released last week is proposing a scheme that would see fossil fuel generators paid – by taxpayers of course – to keep operating or remain ready to step in when required as a guarantee of stability to the system! It is called a "capacity mechanism," but is more commonly and accurately referred to as a "coal keeper."

Climate Change and Energy Minister

Chris Bowen indicated support for such a scheme at the recent meeting of state and territory energy ministers. Victoria and the ACT have indicated they are not in support of contributing to such a scheme.

Apart from it being a misdirection of funds propping up fossil fuels, the proposition fails to address the causes of the crisis. It is yet another measure to extend the life of coal mining and could even be used as an excuse to open new mines. Clearly not what to do.

Origin has announced plans to bring forward its closure of Eraring by seven years to 2025 and AGL is looking at closing for Bayswater between 2030 and 2033 and Loy Yang A between 2040 and 2045. WA's two remaining state-owned, coal-fired plants are set to close before the end of the decade with the state government committing half a billion for the employment of displaced workers.

BHP plans to close its Mount Arthur mine in 2030, fifteen years ahead of its scheduled end of life after failing to find a buyer for it.

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## Guardian

Issue 2012

27th June, 2022

## AMA PRESIDENT URGES IMMEDIATE ACTION ON HEALTHCARE CRISIS

Earlier this month, ahead of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's first national cabinet meeting, Dr Omar Khorshid, Australian Medical Association (AMA) President, stated in a media release that – together with our state governments – the federal government needed to “act immediately, starting with COVID-19 funding and a new hospital agreement.”

While noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has placed Australia in debt, Khorshid further stated that Australia “shouldn't accept ambulance ramping, lengthening elective surgery lists and dangerous emergency department waiting times” and that these were “evidence of governments failing to invest in health.”

To fix our ailing healthcare system, Khorshid outlined “a checklist of health reform” which included – but was not limited to “extend[ing] the National Partnership Agreement on COVID-19 beyond September, preferably until 2025”; “draw[ing] up a new National Health Reform Agreement where states and territories equally share hospital funding 50-50 with the commonwealth and the 6.5 per cent cap on growth is scrapped.”; “address the critical workforce shortage in health and the ongoing impact of the pandemic on that workforce”; and “tackle chronic disease – the biggest burden on the health system, with earlier prevention intervention and management in the community.”

Indeed, Australia's healthcare system needs much improving and it's not just the experts saying it, the public is too.

Australia's healthcare rating fell from 7.8 out of 10 in March last year to 7.2 in June this year the Australian Healthcare Index survey shows. The survey had almost 12,000 participants and was conducted in April.

Speaking on the findings, Healthengine chief executive Marcus Tan stated they revealed an “impending and significant” crisis in healthcare, further stating that: “The overall trend is heading in the wrong direction suggesting that the Australian healthcare system is under stress, likely leading to worse experiences and outcomes.”

Tan's analysis is not incorrect. Participants stated three main concerns; the cost of private healthcare insurance, emergency department waiting room times, and access to mental health care. Additionally, almost one in four respondents stated that their mental health had declined in the past six months. Almost sixty per cent of people still seeking treatment had been waiting more than three months.

It remains to be seen what came out of the first national cabinet meeting – or any future national cabinet meetings as Albanese has backflipped on national cabinet secrecy, a practice he opposed in opposition but is committing to in government. However, it is important that workers in the healthcare sector continue to fight and push for better reforms otherwise Australia's healthcare system will be in further decline.

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Continued from page 1

## NO MORE FRACKING

Santos, the company that ripped billions out of Timor Leste, is the latest to submit plans to explore for fracked gas in the Liverpool Plains in the North West of NSW – one of Australia's most productive food bowls. It also has plans to frack near Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and drill just off the Tiwi Islands.

“Santos should be toxic to associate with, in the same way tobacco companies are. But Santos' PR strategy of sponsoring local events to buy public support is one of their strongest tools for furthering their agenda,” Kelly Albion from 350.org said.

It is not the only energy monopoly with plans to open new gas and coal operations. Any government with an ounce of integrity would ensure they are still born.

These companies pay little or no tax on the profits of this toxic industry as they rip out the resources owned by the people of Australia and destroy Indigenous heritage and the environment and propel climate change.

The privately-owned fossil fuel power generation stations are free to determine when they close and when they have outages to milk the market. Governments do not decide.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The national (excluding WA) energy grid is in a state of crisis and disrepair. It cannot handle peak loads, or the increasing input from renewables. It needs a complete redesign and modernisation.

The poles and wires have not been properly maintained by private sector contractors. They are cowboy operators, undermining wages and working conditions, casualising workforces, while operating with little or no accountability.

Feed-in tariffs – the rebate credited to your electricity bill – for excess energy created by solar panels have been shrinking. Some electricity retailers have stopped paying them altogether, discouraging consumers from going solar. If they do not have battery storage,

households are limited to using solar energy during the daytime.

## JOBS

The closures will see thousands of workers displaced and in need of training and jobs.

In April this year the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) launched “A Blueprint for Better, Cleaner Jobs”. The union commissioned the report from the progressive think tank Per Capita because of the absence of a plan to transition workers and communities into good jobs in a growing renewables industry.

The report indicated that more than 450,000 jobs could be created in the coming decades under a national renewable energy plan. “We have the opportunity now to create a national plan for the thousands of workers in dozens of regional communities which currently rely on fossil fuel sources for their jobs and economic prosperity,” ETU Acting National Secretary Michael Wright said.

The ETU is in a struggle against some of the multinationals constructing wind and solar projects over their industrial relations practices. In one instance in Queensland 230 casual workers were sacked without notice. Local qualified workers are pitted against backpackers for “casual jobs” with long hours.

“Uncoordinated unilateral plans have led to insecure and unsafe work and sudden disruptions like overnight closure announcements leaving thousands of workers in precarious employment or worse, unemployed with no future job prospects,” ETU National President Troy Gray said.

The report's recommendations include the creation of sector specific industry plans; targeted incentives in renewable energy zones; kickstarting a research revolution; and restoration of TAFE funding to pre-2013 levels.

## WAY FORWARD

Addressing climate change is the absolute priority. There is no time to waste. Support for workers and local communities is integral to a just transition. No worker should be worse off. New projects will be

required where communities are located.

Communities and trade unions must be consulted on retraining and investment in new industries and storage of energy as part of a just transition. This just transition is urgent. Free training in TAFE or university should be offered, while continuing to receive their previous income. Governments must come to the party on this.

The energy sector is far too important to be owned and controlled by the anarchic private sector. Their only interest is profits, more profits, and ever larger profits. The sector should be nationalised. Its infrastructure redesigned to handle renewable inputs and modernised.

Not a cent more should be ploughed into fossil fuel subsidies.

Existing gas, oil and coal operations should be wound down as quickly as possible with the interests of workers and communities protected. Energy prices will plummet – wind and sun cost nothing.

Government investment in research and development of new technologies for renewable energy and storage, and for manufacturing must be increased, accompanied by an increase in TAFE and university funding. Australia could become a world leading exporter of renewables.

Government subsidies and other incentives must be made available to households, small businesses and farmers. For example, small towns and other centres could have their own wind farms or solar banks with storage for the local community and feed-in the excess to the grid. In Scotland where such projects exist, communities use the profits for local programs.

Planning is key to a rapid and just transition – of the grid and of community infrastructure.

It will cost money. Billions could be raised by slashing the military budget including the nuclear-powered submarines and the ending fossil fuel subsidies. In the end it will pay huge dividends for people's pockets and health, for the environment, for Indigenous heritages, and importantly in tackling climate change. ☘

## Jack McPhillips' Communists and the Trade Unions

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2022 edition



# CPA STATEMENT ON JULIAN ASSANGE

**The Communist Party of Australia condemns in the strongest possible terms the decision by the UK government to extradite Julian Assange to the United States.**

Julian Assange, his family and friends have been put through years of inhumane pressure by politically motivated charges that aim to penalise people's right to know.

Julian Assange, Australian citizen, Wikileaks editor, whistle-blower, journalist and publisher, has been persecuted and imprisoned for revealing details of murder and other crimes by the US Government in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The CPA has passed resolutions in the past demanding his release and his right to be brought back to his home in Australia. His horrendous treatment, while defending the politically motivated charges, included plans to assassinate him.

Julian Assange is being sought by the United States for publishing US government documents that exposed war crimes and human rights abuses in 2010. The politically motivated charges represent an unprecedented attack on press freedom and the public's right to know seeking to criminalise basic journalistic activity. Freedom of speech and of the press are at stake.

The categorisation by Independent MP Andrew Wilkie that

this is "an international farce" is supported by the analysis of thousands of Wikileaks cables by Professor Clinton Fernandes which showed there was no evidence that Assange harmed anyone.

This is a political case which has nothing to do with justice.

The recent British government decision to extradite him to the US, potentially condemns Assange to up to 175 years in prison – likely to be spent in extreme isolation – for briefing the world on the massive human rights abuses of powerful states, for publishing truthful information in the public interest.

The Communist Party of Australia calls on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, to urgently secure Assange's freedom by making representations with US President Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. All charges must be dropped and Assange must be brought back home.

The CPA will continue to campaign for Julian Assange's freedom and calls on all party members and supporters to write to PM Anthony Albanese asking him to bring Assange home.

Contact details:  
www.pm.gov.au/  
contact-your-pm

**Central Committee  
Communist Party  
of Australia  
21st June 2022**



Photo: Anthony Crider – commons.wikimedia.org (CC BY 2.0)

## Freedom of speech and of the press are at stake.

## WORKERS WIN HISTORIC WAGE INCREASE IN ANNUAL WAGE REVIEW

B Curphey

**The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has struck a strong middle ground with a 5.2 per cent wage hike announced on 15th June. The minimum wage will rise by 5.2 per cent from 1st July. That's a new minimum \$21.38 per hour or an increase of about \$40 per week. Minimum award rates will increase by 4.6 per cent or a minimum of \$40 per week.**

Governments, industry groups, and trade unions are invited to make submissions to the Annual Wage Review (AWR). This year, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) proposed a 5.5 per cent increase to the national minimum wage as well as minimum award rates.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Industry Group and other bodies representing employers unsurprisingly proposed a much lower increase of around 2.5-3 per cent. Other groups even suggested that the minimum wage should not increase! After much controversy in the media, the Albanese government

ultimately submitted that the "real wages of low-paid workers [should] not go backwards."

The FWC noted in its summary decision that one of the "most significant changes since last year's [AWR] has been the sharp rise in the cost of living and the strengthening of the labor market." Inflation, in general, is through the roof, with the cost of fresh food at an all-time high. During last year's AWR inflation stood at around 1.1 per cent. This year that number was 5.1 per cent.

Iceberg lettuce has become the symbol of this crisis, and the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) was quick to jump on this trend by pointing out that an increase of \$40 per week will only buy around three heads of lettuce at current prices. While funny, this reminds us that there are serious questions looming about whether 5.2 per cent is enough.

ACTU suggests that it isn't. In a statement on the 8th May, the peak union body pointed out that a higher increase of 5.5 per cent would keep pace not just with inflation as it currently stands, but also with the RBA's forecast for an inflation increase to 5.5 per cent by mid-year.

There was no sign of this argument in ACTU's press release celebrating the win on the 15th June, but it was argued that longer-term systemic change to the wage-setting system is needed:

"Australia needs a plan to ensure that over time, wages grow for working people, and a system which will deliver on that plan. The current system is not delivering for working people."

If the RBA's forecast of 5.5 per cent comes true, then the 5.2 per cent wage increase will not be enough to relieve workers of the burden of the rising cost of living. At the time of writing, the RBA has yet to release its June statistics on the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

After ten years of stagnant wages, the FWC's decision is a huge relief to workers. However, it also shows just how broken the system is. As Sally McManus, President of the ACTU, points out, wages have gone backwards in real terms despite "low unemployment, high productivity and high profits." To put it simply: capitalism cannot deliver long-term sustainable wage growth for workers, not while profit-hungry employers and governments sympathetic to their cause have a say in the matter. ✪

**To Kevin Price, hoping for a speedy recovery – your comrade David M.**

Adelaide



### CURRY WITH COMRADES!

SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER:

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GENERAL SECRETARY  
COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND

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# AUSTRALIA “OPPOSES” US STATEMENT ON UN REPORT INTO HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

Valentin Cartillier

**Australia has refused to sign a statement, alongside over twenty other countries, released by the US regarding an inquiry into human rights violations in Palestine and Israel. A statement delivered by US Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Michèle Taylor held that Israel has been unfairly targeted by the UNHRC and stated that:**

“We continue to believe that this long-standing disproportionate scrutiny should end, and that the Council should address all human rights concerns, regardless of country, in an even-handed manner.”

Among the signatories who backed these claims were Germany, the UK, Brazil, Canada, Guatemala, Bulgaria, Togo, Cameroon.

The US contends that the Committee of Information (COI) inquiry, set up last year, into human rights abuses in Israel and Palestine, is too open ended and would make Israel the only country permanently under investigation by the UNHRC. Australia opposed the claim that Israel is the only country under constant scrutiny but is in agreement that the UNHRC disproportionately focuses on Israel. The COI has only been in existence for just over a year and was set up in response to the escalation of violence that occurred

in May 2021 (see *Guardian* “How long will it last?”: Ceasefire in Palestine’ #1963). The COI report didn’t exclusively focus on Israel but also cited the disregard of the State of Palestine for upholding human rights. The report stated that Palestine frequently justified its human rights violations due to the ongoing occupation of their territory by Israel. The report also made the same claim about Hamas in the West Bank.

While signalling a slight shift in Australian foreign policy, it does not mark any major departure from the US. The refusal to sign was not over broader US policy in the area but simply that the US called for the COI to be ended. Australia’s UN Ambassador Amanda Gorely stated that:

“Viewing any conflict from one perspective will not achieve that goal [...] Australia remains deeply concerned about the ongoing conflict, loss of life and human rights abuses, and the lack of progress towards a just and enduring two-state solution.”

One is left wondering how exactly it’s possible to arrive at this “just and enduring two-state solution,” particularly while expressing concerns over human rights violations, when the balance of power in the region is so fundamentally uneven.

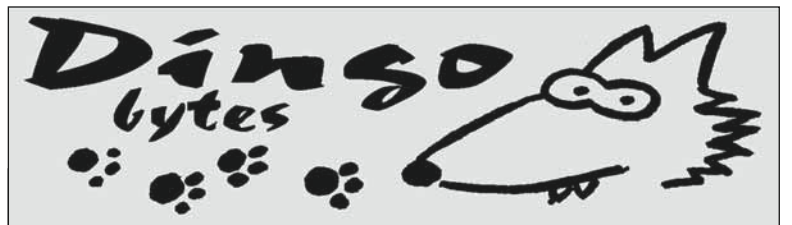
A spokesperson for the Foreign Affairs Minister, Penny Wong, said



Photo: Matt Hrkac – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

the new Labor government has “taken the opportunity to elaborate on our approach to the Middle East peace process by issuing a national statement” and that “Australia’s statement is consistent with a long-held bipartisan position.” There doesn’t seem much to elaborate on if the new government is simply going to remain in lockstep with the US, as it historically has done, under the guise of adopting a “bipartisan position.”

## The balance of power in the region is fundamentally uneven



The Russian government’s visitation ban on a list of media types and some residents of Australia’s corporate cesspool has brought forth the nationalist breast-beating and the equivalent of the schoolyard finger. Mining oligarch Gina Rinehart called for “millions of smart mines” (the exploding type) to encircle Australia’s coastline, along with “missiles, war drones and more”. Rinehart – whose mine magnate father was a proponent of genocide against Indigenous Australians – was joined by fellow billionaire miner Andrew Forrest, who called for countries in Europe to stop buying Russian gas. The Russian ban is, in part, a response to stream of verbal diarrhoea about Russia from the mass media: a stream that’s been running since before a shot was fired in Ukraine. The mass media blitz leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the “coalition of the willing” ran along similar lines. The pretext for invasion – a claim Iraq had “weapons of mass destruction” – as pronounced by George W Bush, Tony Blair, and John Howard, was the big lie in a firestorm of lies, and a crime that cost the lives of more than a million Iraqis. Now the western military industrial complex is fighting a war against Russia by fuelling the conflict in Ukraine, a place where NATO wants a base with nuclear missiles aimed at Russia. The trio at the head of the current coalition of the killing is again the US, Britain, and Australia.

“On 17 June, following consideration by both the Magistrates Court and High Court, the extradition of Mr Julian Assange to the US was ordered.” Thus began the statement by the British Home Office pronouncing the death sentence of an Australian citizen. Just so we’re not left in doubt, the statement continues: “In this case, the UK courts have not found that it would be oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process to extradite Mr Assange, nor have they found that extradition would be incompatible with his human rights, including his right to a fair trial and to freedom of expression, and that while in the US he will be treated appropriately, including in relation to his health.” Assange is not being sent into the arms of his executioners to be granted freedom, justice or human rights of any kind. And the Albanese government? Greg Barnes SC is working with the Australian Assange Campaign: “This is an appalling decision. We appreciate the new Australian government is conscious of highly significant issues in this case: Freedom of the press and most importantly Julian Assange’s human rights. We think now is the time for the government to work with its key allies in Washington and London to end this case.”

**PARASITE OF THE WEEK:** And so, the free market leads us into our bright future ... hey, who turned off the lights!?!?

**COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA NATIONAL SCHOOL**  
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 22-24 JULY 2022

<p><b>FRIDAY</b>                  6:30 - 8:30 PM                  PAMPHLET LAUNCH  <i>Communists and the Trade Unions</i>                  2022 edition</p>	<p><b>SATURDAY</b>                  9:30 AM - 12:30 PM                  THREE SOURCES AND THREE COMPONENT PARTS OF MARXISM</p> <p>1:40 - 4:30 PM                  COMMUNISTS IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE UNION MOVEMENT                  Panel Discussion</p>	<p><b>SUNDAY</b>                  9:30 AM - 12:30 PM                  DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM AND CONTRADICTION ANALYSIS</p> <p>1:40 - 3:00 PM                  CPA CONSTITUTION</p>
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**DETAILS**  
 FRI: 365 SUSSEX ST, SYDNEY  
 SAT-SUN: 72-74 BUCKINGHAM ST, SURRY HILLS  
 FOR MORE INFO: nsw@cpa.org.au





# OPEN LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

**The Hon Anthony Albanese MP**  
**Prime Minister**  
**Parliament House**  
**CANBERRA ACT 2600**  
**21 June 2022**

Dear Prime Minister Albanese,  
**The Communist Party of Australia wishes to congratulate you on the election of a Labor government and the more diverse Cabinet of MPs and Senators. We recognise you will face many challenges from the nine years of the corrupt, dysfunctional Coalition government with its anti-worker, union-bashing record.**

We warmly welcome your government's swift action to support a cost-of-living increase in the minimum wage. The outcome is a start to arresting the decline in real wages experienced by low- and middle-income workers over recent decades.

We are concerned that the income of Social Security recipients is not keeping pace with rising prices. JobSeeker recipients in particular have been hard hit and we would urge you to reconsider your decision not to increase JobSeeker in real terms during your first term of office. We believe that Social Security recipients have a right to an adequate income above the poverty line at a level where they can live in dignity.

We applaud your decision to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission and the Registered Organisations Commission. There are, however, other important reforms to the industrial relations system that we urge you to implement; the unfettered right to strike, abolition of the right of entry permit system, and restoration of industry bargaining.

We applaud your preparedness at the recent National Cabinet meeting to retain the ratio of health funding with states and territories at 50:50 until the end of the year. However, the health crisis will not be solved by then and we believe that funding ratio should be kept on an ongoing basis. In this regard we ask that MEDICARE be protected and further funded to include dental care for all.

Your commitment to the Uluru statement made in your election night speech was warmly greeted and we hope you will not only honour that commitment but take measures to strengthen land rights and end the sacrilegious destruction of the cultural heritage of First Nations people.

Public education is facing a crisis with huge shortages in funding for staff and resources. It is unacceptable that funding to private schools rapidly increased at the expense of public schools. It is time to turn it around. Your commitment to free TAFE places is very welcome. There also needs to be additional funding for the university

sector which was hit hard during the pandemic with tens of thousands of jobs lost and courses cut. We believe all education from early childhood through to university should be free. The financial and developmental dividends for Australia would well outdo the expenditure.

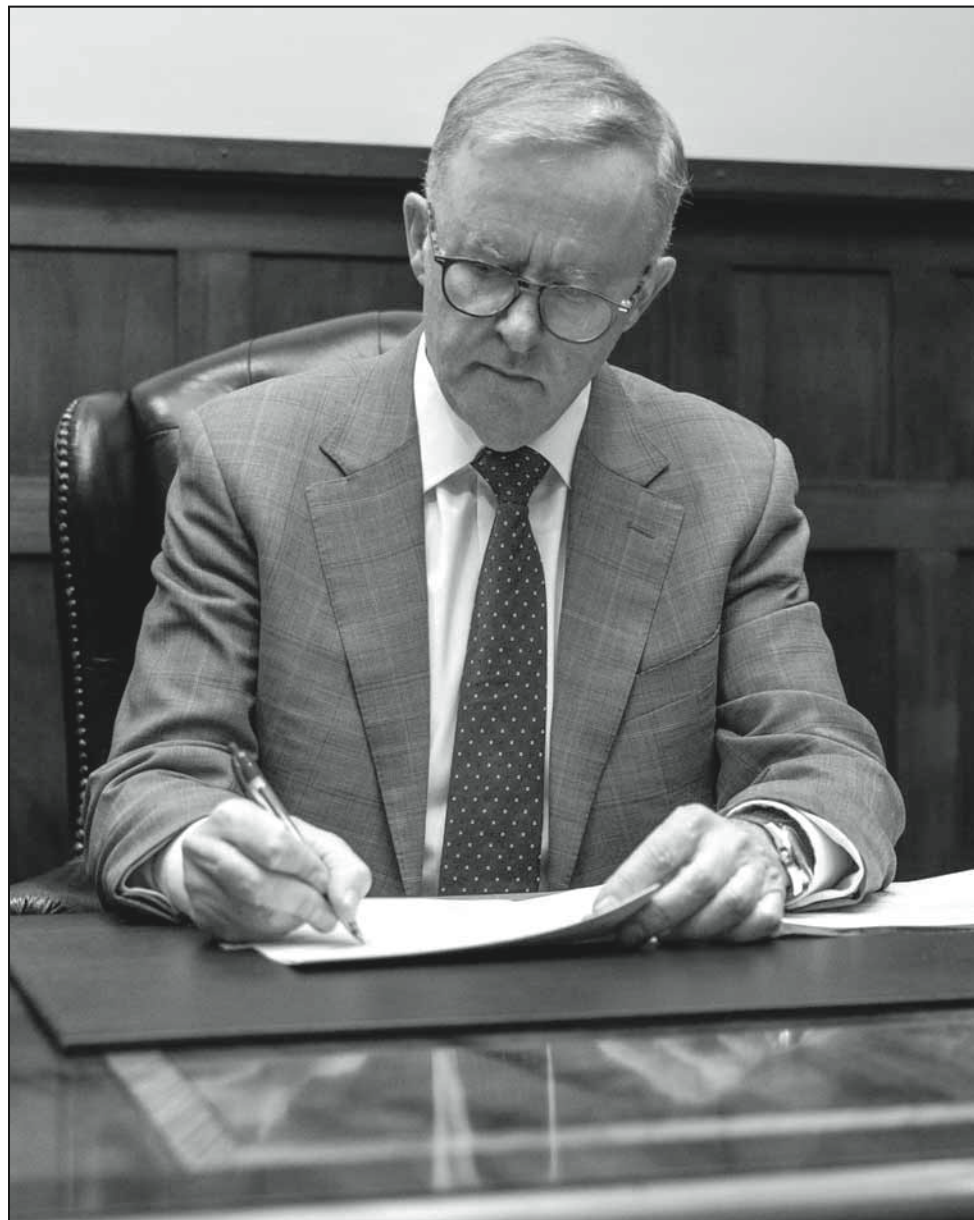
Your government has been left with an aged care system in crisis – massive loss of life from COVID, staffing shortages and abuse of residents to name a few issues. We acknowledge your commitment to increase funding by \$2.5 billion which is welcome but the findings of the Royal Commission found much more is needed. We believe a conflict of interest arises when care is provided on a for-profit basis. The private sector has failed. Aged care needs to be nationalised and the whole regulatory regime overhauled to ensure appropriate standards are maintained.

The NDIS is also in crisis and in need of massive reform. The private sector again has shown that the market fails, especially when trying to deliver support at the same time creaming off billions of dollars in private profits. As the architects of this system we urge your government to take full responsibility and nationalise this scheme, to end contracting out and overhaul the allocation of resources and regulate the sector so that it truly is client centred.

Your government has increased the target for emissions to forty-three per cent, an improvement on the Coalition target but we believe it is possible for Australia, with so much wind and sun and surrounded by thousands of kilometres of ocean, to make a considerable boost to that target. The present energy crisis demonstrates the failure of the Coalition and markets to transition to renewable energy. The crisis was deepened by the fossil fuel subsidies which must be cut. We urge you to nationalise the energy sector to ensure affordable energy for households and businesses and facilitate a just transition.

The CPA also welcomes your swift action to return the Biloela family to their community which signifies an end to their immediate torture. However, a cloud remains which can only be lifted by granting permanent visas. We urge your government to free the family and grant those visas. We recognise, also, that hundreds of refugees continue to live in limbo. Your government needs to adopt a humanitarian policy to end offshore detention and other inhumane policies such as boat turnbacks. Australia must adhere to its international humanitarian commitments. We need to increase the number of humanitarian visas.

We congratulate your government on its stand at the United Nations in not supporting the US-led opposition to an inquiry into human rights abuses by Israel in the occupied territories of Palestine. We urge



Prime Minister Albanese signing submission to the Fair Work Commission, recommending Australia's lowest-paid workers not go backwards. Photo: @AlboMP twitter account

also that your government take up the olive branch extended by China on the basis of reciprocity, mutual respect and relations based on mutual benefit. China should be seen as a partner and not a rival.

The Communist Party strongly believes that the contract for nuclear-powered submarines only increases tensions and should be cancelled. The planned increase in offensive weapons and US bases and other military facilities also increases tensions. Former Defence Minister Peter Dutton's statement that "If you prepare for war, you prevent war" is a nonsense. If you prepare for war, you get war. We urge you instead to prepare for peace and initiate a peace budget and

redirect military expenditure to alleviate the causes of war.

Finally, The Communist Party of Australia calls on you to urgently secure Assange's freedom by making representations with US President Biden and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson. All charges must be dropped and he must be brought back home.

We thank you for your time and would be very happy to discuss any of these issues with you or your Ministers.

Yours Faithfully,

**Vinnie Molina**  
**President**  
**Communist Party of Australia**

**COMMUNIST PARTY OF AUSTRALIA**  
**PAMPHLET LAUNCH**

**JACK McPHILLIPS**

**COMMUNISTS and the TRADE UNIONS**

2022 edition

Hosted by

Special Guest Speakers

FRANC STREGONE  
 Assistant President  
 CPA NSW State Committee

DAVID MATTERS  
 Assistant General Secretary  
 CPA

WARREN SMITH  
 Deputy National Secretary  
 MUA

JIMMY DONOVAN  
 Veterans National Secretary  
 MUA

DATE: FRIDAY, 22ND JULY  
 TIME: 7 - 8:30 PM AEST (DOORS OPEN 6:30 PM)  
 LOCATION: MUA BUILDING - 365-375 SUSSEX ST,  
 SYDNEY, NSW  
 Live stream via Facebook: facebook.com/CPAAustralia

Find out more about the

**Communist Party of Australia**

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# SOUTH AUSTRALIA: CUBAN SOLIDARITY AND PARTY BUILDING ON THE AGENDA

Over the course of the last period, CPA South Australia has been involved in a litany of tasks to strengthen our Party and promote working class values. Below are a few of the activities and events in which we have been involved.

## FIDEL'S HOSTS BOOK LAUNCH

Although the book being launched was about a First Nations community in the far north of Canada, *The Spirit of Pehdzeh Ki – the Struggle for Land Rights*, illustrates how reprehensibly Indigenous peoples not only in North America, but also in Australia, as in fact around the world, face exploitation, devaluation of traditional knowledge, and suppression of language. The book represents a collaboration by two comrades, Bev and Ron Hall, who have an adopted son, and consequently grandchildren, with Australian First Nations heritage.

The book was launched by Adjunct Professor Joan Gibbs who has Chickahominy background from Virginia, US. Gibbs has spent the largest part of her career lecturing in Environmental Studies at the University of South Australia, preparing many students for work in environmental protection. With the help of Dr Kevin "Dookie" O'Loughlin, Gibbs introduced First Nations knowledge so vital for understanding the Australian landscape and how it should be managed into her program at the University of South Australia. As a specialist in fire management, Gibbs has featured on ABC programs *Landline* and *Gardening Australia*. O'Loughlin, a Narungga Elder from Point Pearce, is a greatly respected Cultural and Reconciliation advisor who introduced many young Aboriginal students to careers in cultural tourism and fostered a deeper understanding of traditional knowledge.

Erica Jolly, a poet, author and writer, who greatly assisted as an advisor and proof reader, commented on how the book emphasised the need for just treatment of First Nations people. Erica was a former Deputy Principal at Marion High School and holds a Master of Arts degree in English Literature. Her critiques of education policy, especially under conservative governments, starkly reveal those governments narrow vision and lack of appreciation of the arts as a complement to science.

David Walters, Director of Green Hill Publishing, expressed his pleasure to be part of the launch and his surprise to discover such a workers' haunt as Fidel's. Comrade Dylan Whiteford-Hall, Bev and Ron's grandson, gave the acknowledgement of country and later in the program screened a DVD that introduced cultural activities involving the Pehdzeh Ki community, such as school fishing expedition, drum dances and a traditional game known as stick gamble.



Ron and Bev Hall, Elizabeth Hulm, Dylan Whiteford-Hall and Vinnie Molina.

Afternoon tea and refreshments from the bar were enjoyed to the accompaniment of background music, mainly of drumming for drum dances while an opportunity was provided for the signing of books.

Comrades Bev and Ron want to express their gratitude especially to Comrades Sally Mitchell, Sean Dempsey, and Liam Ellis for their willing help and support offered for the book launch and would like to confirm how wonderful the Workers' Club and Fidel's proved to be for the occasion.

**NOTE:** With a capacity of approximately 50 people, Fidel's makes an excellent venue for a variety of events, **Contact: 0413 762 435.**

## INTERSTATE VISIT

One of the resolutions from CPA SA annual plan called for greater contact with other state branches so that solidarity could be strengthened and there could be an exchange of ideas. Bev and Ron Hall along with their grandson, Dylan, all members of the Port Adelaide Branch, took advantage of a planned visit to Western Australia to make contact with our Western Australian comrades.

## BRANCH DEVELOPMENT

A continuing issue for the Party in South Australia has been the need for further branches beyond the Port Adelaide Branch. A Central Branch was operating in the city just a few years ago. Recent discussion has focused on renewing a central branch or developing another branch in the north. There is the possibility of using our Zoom account to involve members from further afield, for example in the Riverland, to become more involved in Party debates. In Western Australia they have concentrated on consolidating one main branch in Perth.

If any members want to express a point of view about CPA branches in South Australia please contact our party secretary, Liam Ellis at [sa@cpa.org.au](mailto:sa@cpa.org.au).

## CUBAN SOLIDARITY

Strong support for the Cuban people and their David and Goliath struggle with US imperialism has been most notable in Western Australia in conjunction with the WA branch of the Australia Cuba Friendship Society. A similar relationship exists here in

South Australia. However, WA has regular and prominent demonstrations which are fully recorded on the CPA Facebook page.

## CELEBRATION OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

An opportunity for comrades to support the Cuban Revolution with Australia Cuba Friendship Society (ACFS) SA Fiesta for Cuba on Saturday, 30th July at Fidel's. Watch for further details.

ACFS across Australia has offered sterling support to Cuba during this extremely challenging time for the Cuban people, not only because of the COVID pandemic, but even more because of the tightening of the illegal and ongoing vindictive US economic blockade of the Cuban people. ACFS WA initiated the 2020 *Syringes for Cuba Campaign* that raised over \$60,000 for medical supplies to be shipped to Cuba. Following this ACFS Brisbane raised \$28,000 through their 2021 *To Cuba with Love Campaign*. 🇨🇺

# Indigenous people face exploitation, devaluation of traditional knowledge, and suppression of language.



# OP-ED: CALLS FOR DRUG POLICY REFORM INCREASE NATION-WIDE

## PART ONE



Photo: Marco Verch – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

N Stallon

**Calls for drug policy reforms are sweeping the country after the Legalise Cannabis Australia party received 2-6 per cent of the Senate vote in each state, making it the fifth or sixth most popular party in each state and territory except for the ACT where recreational cannabis use has already been decriminalised since 2020.**

Despite medicinal cannabis being legalised in 2016, only 2000 prescriptions were issued in 2018 when cannabis products were first made available. Since 2018, prescriptions have rapidly grown as access has become easier. Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) data shows more than 122,000 prescriptions were issued in 2021 alone, more than doubling the 2020 figure. FreshLeaf Analytics' H2 2021 report forecast 90,000 active patients by the end of 2021.

Medicinal cannabis is a rapidly growing global industry predicted to be worth \$80 billion in 2024 by the Australian Medicinal Cannabis Industry Report. FreshLeaf Analytics forecasts Australian medicinal cannabis sales of \$423 million in 2022, with more than 224 medicinal cannabis products on the market and more than 430 authorised prescribers.

Medicinal cannabis is most commonly prescribed for chronic pain, followed by anxiety, cancer pain and symptom management, insomnia, neuropathic pain, PTSD, depression, autism spectrum disorder, and epilepsy. Oil and flower products are the most popular products, together accounting for over eighty per cent of available products, followed by capsules, wafers, and sprays.

There is a growing body of research demonstrating that medicinal cannabis is a safe and effective medical treatment. Importantly, legalisation allows users to find appropriate doses to suit their needs and provides access to reliable, safe, and regulated products without the threat of criminal conviction.

However, despite legalisation, there remain numerous barriers facing people in need of treatment.

A 2020 study from the Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics found that ninety-seven per cent of Australians using cannabis for medicinal purposes were purchasing it illegally due to a lack of awareness of its legality, limited access to medical practitioners willing to prescribe it, and the high price of legal medicinal cannabis.

Patients unable to find a GP willing to prescribe medicinal cannabis are forced to pay from \$300 to \$500 for an initial appointment at a private cannabis clinic, with further costs for follow up appointments for subsequent prescriptions. In addition, FreshLeaf Analytics reports an average patient spend of \$278 per month for medicinal cannabis products. As price is determined by the strength of active ingredients, those requiring stronger doses are forced to pay even more.

Medicinal cannabis is a research-backed and popular health product taken by tens of thousands of Australians every day for numerous health conditions. **Medicinal cannabis products must be added to the PBS to make them more affordable and accessible for those who need them.**

Medicinal cannabis users also face discriminatory road rules. Tasmania is the only state or territory to provide a legal exemption

to drug driving laws for patients legally prescribed medicinal cannabis.

This means that in the majority of Australia, legal medicinal cannabis patients are de-facto barred from ever legally driving. This is due to roadside drug test kits detecting traces of THC in saliva, rather than impairment. THC generally stays in saliva for at least twenty-four hours, well after consuming or experiencing impairment from taking medicinal cannabis.

Patients taking medicinal cannabis daily may always test positive for THC. Yet, there is no test for actual impairment used in Australia, nor a defence for medicinal use.

The UK, New Zealand, Norway, Germany, Ireland, several US states, and Tasmania all have a medical defence for drug driving charges. Legislation to provide a medical defence to drug driving laws is currently before the NSW, Victorian, and South Australian parliaments. However, the NSW Liberal Party has already come out against the reform.

Such bills would bring medicinal cannabis in line with other impairing prescription drugs, making it legal to have traces in your system so long as you are not driving under the influence and have a prescription.

There are also increasing calls to legalise the medicinal use of MDMA (ecstasy) and psilocybin ("magic mushrooms") for therapy to address the mental health pandemic. This comes after a number of large overseas studies tested the products alongside psychotherapy, while the Australian government's Medical Research Future Fund in 2022 committed \$15 million for trials.

MDMA has been trialled for treating PTSD, while psilocybin has been used to

treat a variety of mental health disorders including depression.

Despite an independent expert panel telling the TGA of the emerging evidence of therapeutic value and recognising that psychedelic drugs could be used to treat mental illnesses in supervised clinical settings, the TGA recently denied a request from psychedelic advocacy group Mind Medicine Australia (MMA) to drop MDMA and Psilocybin to Schedule 8 to provide better access for mental health treatment.

The TGA cited concerns over misuse by patients or diversion of medicinal products onto the illicit recreational market as reasons for rejecting the request.

MMA co-founder and Chair, Peter Hunt, rejected these claims, arguing that there are a whole range of medicines already in use that are far more dangerous if abused, and that doctors or pharmacists are unlikely to risk losing their licence to divert medical grade drugs onto the recreational market where they would be far more expensive than current options.

The continued insistence on rejecting demonstrated medicinal use-cases to prevent recreational use shows the failure of the "tough on crime" war on drugs policies. The new Labor government needs to listen to the advice of health experts and legislate medicinal drug use when recommended.

Medicinal cannabis should be more readily available from GPs, subsidised by the PBS, with users exempt from drug-driving charges when not genuinely driving under the influence. MDMA and psilocybin should be available for the supervised treatment of mental illnesses. ✳



# REPORT: PUBLIC SECTOR ALLIANCE MASS BARGAINING MEETING, WORKERS EMBASSY PARLIAMENT HOUSE – PERTH



Richard Titelius

**In mid-2021, unions with members in the Western Australian Public Sector formed the Public Sector Alliance (PSA) to present a united position on a wage increase to the WA state government of Premier Mark McGowan – also the State Treasurer.**

The PSA was originally comprised of the Community and Public Sector Union/Civil Service Association (CPSU/CSA), State School Teachers Union, Health Services Union, United Workers Union, Rail Tram and Bus Union, United Professional Firefighters, Professionals WA, WA Prison Officers Union and peak trade union body, Unions WA. It has since been joined by the WA Police Union. On 12th November 2021, the PSA held a mass meeting which was attended by over 400 delegates, members, and officials at which they made their case for the formation of the Alliance. They agreed to urge the government to make an offer that was in keeping with inflation and acknowledged the hard work of public sector workers during the pandemic and since.

The government had a robust surplus and they wanted to engage in genuine bargaining for wages instead of a wages cap which they had endured over the last five years. Just before Christmas, Premier McGowan announced a government wages policy which was essentially 2.5 per cent over two years. At the time inflation was less than

3 per cent per annum but early in 2022 as the pandemic started to ease and economic activity picked up, inflation jumped to over five per cent nationally and 7.6 per cent in Perth itself – the highest of any capital city.

The CPSU/CSA entered into negotiations with the state government to hammer out an agreement. In May 2022 in a climate of rapidly evolving economic and financial conditions settled their claim at 4.75 per cent for the first year and 4.5 per cent for the second year plus a number of improvements to conditions including Infectious Diseases Leave and the Right to Disconnect. United Workers under the slogan of, “5 to survive!”, have gone for a similar claim. The Premier has yet to respond meaningfully to any of the pay claims of public sector unions.

Against this backdrop the Fair Work Commission handed down a decision increasing the federal minimum wage by 5.2 per cent and 4.6 per cent for award workers close to the minimum wage. On the same day the WA PSA held a Mass Bargaining meeting at the Workers Embassy over the road from the WA State Parliament building. It was attended by over 150 union delegates and officials. The first speaker was CPSU/CSA State Secretary, Rikki Hendon: “We are at a point where we are frustrated and struggling with a framework that has not delivered decent wage outcomes for public servants.” “We need genuine bargaining to deliver a proper wage outcome.”

The next speaker, Minister for Industrial

Relations Bill Johnstone, himself a former union member, reminded those unionists present that workers need to be represented by unions that deliver better wages and conditions for their members. Johnstone recognised that not everyone is happy with the bargaining process, however the ALP government had delivered on increased permanency in the public sector.

He was followed by a member of United Workers Union – Cindy, an Education Assistant in a low socio economic group in Rockingham, one of Perth’s southern suburbs and coincidentally part of Mark McGowan’s electorate. Cindy had been working as an Education Assistant for eighteen years and had seen in that time that life had become more difficult for students and for their parents. Cindy also needed a part-time job to make ends meet and even that was not enough when her rent was increased by \$120. Her three adult children are now helping her with the rent. Cindy likes her work as she enjoys being able to make a difference, often the difference between a child giving up on schooling or continuing through so they have more and better choices in life. Cindy is also one of many workers considering leaving her job for a better paying one to make ends meet – in this case going into a mental health support role. Without a decent wage rise, workers will leave the sector.

The next speaker was Erica, a lab technician in a high school, who has seen the lives not only of fellow workers go backwards in

real terms but also the students that they assist to help them lift their life chances in life.

Craig, a member of the Health Services Union and professionally a child psychologist said that there were people leaving the industry as they were overworked, including by being given long wait lists for clients they have little chance of giving prompt or adequate care. Cheryl another member of the Health Services Union added that all of us had helped keep the state going through COVID: “Look after us, respect us and pay us [what we are worth].”

The workers in the public sector have done their part and now it is up to the government to deliver a wage increase to help attract and retain good workers and that keeps up with inflation – which the current government offer of 2.5 per cent per annum would not deliver.

After the rally at the Workers Embassy, the delegates and other union officials walked to the front of parliament house to deliver their message to those inside.

The Communist Party of Australia supports the WA Public Sector Alliance in their campaign for wage and work justice which is long overdue without which workers wages would go backwards and some workers might be forced to leave the sector. The CPA recognises unions and their members will have to step up their campaign in order to have the government respond appropriately to their demands. ✪

**Without a decent wage rise, workers will leave the sector.**



# LGBTQ: A UNITED STRUGGLE

Laura Duggan

**On 27th June, 1974 ten brave souls marched from the Department of Justice in St Stephen's Green to the British embassy in Merrion Road to highlight the criminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland. This was Dublin's first pride march.**

The laws they marched against were the Offences Against the Person Act (1861) and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (1885), both enacted by the British Parliament before Ireland gained independence. These laws were hangovers from British rule of the 26 Counties and had already been repealed in England and Wales in 1967. They were intended to combat the vague Victorian notion of vice and included clauses protecting middle-class women and girls against "male lust" and targeted homosexual men and prostitution specifically for punishment.

Given how dated this sounds, and in the wake of the marriage equality victory in 2015, it is easy to forget that same-sex sexual activity was only decriminalised in Ireland in 1993.

The laws marched against in 1974 were similar to those that had been enacted throughout imperial countries and those that they dominated. Though it is not always clear to us now, the fight for queer liberation has often been entangled with the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggle. Countries such as England, Germany, and France often used examples of alternative, indigenous or "deviant" understandings of gender and sexuality as an excuse to legitimise their "civilising" colonial conquest of other nations. They used laws on sexuality to ensure a cultural colonisation with a political and economic one.

Nascent LGBTQ activists in those European countries also looked to these alternative, non-western expressions to legitimise their own existence. Their understanding of solidarity often centred on the finding of their own identity within the cultures of other nations.

This approach was by no means selfless, pure or without issue either. (The problematic elements are discussed in *Bad Gays: A Homosexual History* by Huw Lemmy and Ben Miller, available on line and in person at Connolly Books.)

The link between the radical left and the LGBTQ liberation movement is not one that solely existed in the west. Almost immediately after the October Revolution the Bolsheviks legalised homosexuality between consenting adults, and, unlike many of the western countries, the official Bolshevik position at the time was that homosexuality was not to be considered a moral issue or failing. This position, unfortunately, did not hold over time.

The German Democratic Republic took the line that homosexuals and communists



Photo: William Murphy (CC BY-SA 2.0)

## The foundation of the Gay Liberation Front blended the radical voices of queer liberation and communism.

fought together against fascism in Nazi Germany and were both targeted and victimised along with the Jewish and Roma people during the Holocaust.

In the West, and specifically in the United States, this radical linking of movements emerged in explicit form in the 1950s with the founding of the Mattachine Society — one of the first national gay rights organisations in the United States — by gay members of the Communist Party USA. The intertwining of the Red and Lavender threats during the McCarthy era weren't just fictions created by right-wing forces but an accurate understanding of the links and bonds between those who struggled against capitalism for a variety of reasons.

The legacy of McCarthyism, of course, is that many LGBTQ groups throughout the West decided to venture into respectability

politics and removed both openly communist members and any radical demands; their aims became acceptance through assimilation. Many communist parties also discouraged open homosexuality in members and often took homophobic positions. That is not to say that collaboration did not exist at this time but not officially in either group, and many gay communists felt obliged to choose between these two aspects of themselves.

It was only in the aftermath of the Stonewall Riots in New York in 1969 that marginalised voices, the working class, the "deviants," and Othered, coalesced again in defence of each other. The foundation of the Gay Liberation Front blended the radical voices of queer liberation and communism; the front marched with Black Power groups and anti-war left-wing activists, feminists, and fellow-travellers.

This was mirrored in England with such campaigning groups as Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, which linked queer liberation struggles with working-class solidarity, and here in Ireland, where LGBTQ groups such as the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Men's Collective fought anti-gay and anti-abortion legislation in the pages of *Quare Times*. (More can be found in the Irish Queer Archive at the National Library of Ireland.)

Our liberation is not one that has ever been given to us by benevolent powers but something that has been fought, sacrificed, and struggled for. Our own first pride march in 1974 is one we should remember and look to as the example of the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and radical roots of queer liberation.

*Socialist Voice* ✪

## UNION LEADERS TALK WITH WHITE HOUSE ON PROTECTING ABORTION ACCESS

Mark Gruenberg

**With a Supreme Court ruling looming abolishing the 49-year-old right to abortion, prominent unionists recently discussed with a top White House aide how to protect women's access once the Republican-named Supreme Court majority yanks the right.**

Representatives of the United Teachers of Dade (AFT), the Michigan Education Association, Service Employees 1199, National Nurses United co-President Deborah Burger, and Coalition of Labour Union Women President Elise Bryant got sympathy from

Democratic President Joe Biden's director of the White House Gender Policy Council.

But they didn't get a commitment for specific moves, Bryant told *People's World* during the AFL-CIO Convention in Philadelphia.

And White House council director Deborah Klein "underscored the president's commitment to reproductive rights." Abortion advocates have recently been engaged in a debate about whether to stick with that euphemism or bluntly use the word "abortion."

The abortion ban is important because "workers of colour, the poor, and working-class people are going to be hurt the most,"

said Washington Baltimore News Guild board member Elise Bryant, president of the Coalition of Labour Union Women.

Some will still be able to get abortions, but only by traveling across multiple red-state lines to reach a blue state that still protects the right to abortion.

But to give an idea of how disastrous outlawing abortion would be, Bryant quoted the White House official, Jennifer Klein, telling the story of two women raped by their father, in pre-*Roe* days, gave birth. "Those women should have had the right to terminate a pregnancy."

Texas criminalised abortion after six weeks, by establishing

\$10,000 bounties for anyone who turns in somebody aiding a woman who seeks an abortion. So women now travel to New Mexico, Colorado, and East St. Louis, Ill., at great personal expense. If they can afford to do so, that is.

And if the majority completely overturns *Roe v Wade*, the historic 1972 decision that made abortion constitutional, the Texas law would become even worse, the *Texas Tribune* reports. The only exception would be to save the life of the mother, or if the mother risks "substantial impairment of major bodily function." Doctors who break the law would face fines of up to \$100,000 and up to life in prison.

Bryant said she raised the idea of a one-day nationwide women's strike, but offered no date. She also got no reaction. "We have to do something," she urges. "This is not an intellectual process."

"This is about power — power over their (women's) own bodies. That's what's being challenged." Of abortion foes, Bryant commented, "They want to go back to the days when women were barefoot and pregnant."

*People's World* ✪



# BY ENGAGING WITH CHINA, PACIFIC COUNTRIES SEEK THEIR OWN PATHS OUT OF POVERTY

## Part One

Roland Boer

From 24th May to 4th June, 2022, China's highly experienced Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, and a large delegation visited eight Pacific countries in person, as well as two by video-conference. The visit did not come out of the blue, for China (PRC) has been building relations with these countries for quite some time. Preparations for such a visit require a significant lead time, as well as detailed planning. Thirty-six concrete agreements with ten countries were signed on Wang Yi's trip, but these were by no means the first. Although some countries have relations with China that go back decades, a key turning point was the agreement between ten Pacific state leaders and the Chinese President at the APEC leaders conference in November 2018. Since then, more and more agreements have been made in many areas, from trade, through infrastructure, to – most importantly – environmental protection and climate change.

Not unexpectedly, there has been much brouhaha among those who – in a paternalistic manner

– see the Pacific countries as “one big family” or “our backyard.” But I am not interested here in the misrepresentations from Australia, New Zealand, or the USA, which have – as observers point out – been scaling back their already minimal engagement. The key question is: what do Pacific countries themselves think of such developments?

For background research, I read well over 100 articles from the local presses in these countries, along with statements from government websites. It is not possible here to address adequately each country visited by Wang Yi's delegation: Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Timor-Leste, along with video conferences with the leaders of the Cook Islands and Niue. So I have selected four of these, seeking to give an impression of what people think.

To begin with the largest country, PNG. A country with very ancient human presence, going back tens of thousands of years, PNG was divided between the German and British empires from 1884. Australia took over colonial control from 1914 to 1975. This “contribution” has ensured that PNG remained extremely poor, with almost half of the population living at subsistence levels.



Vanuatu's independence day. Photo: Graham Crumb/Imagicity.com (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Immediately after independence in 1975, PNG established diplomatic relations with the PRC. As Prime Minister James Marape observed in June 2022, the “China-PNG relationship is as solid and strong as ever since 1976,” and this relationship cannot be compromised or sabotaged “as it is a very important relationship.” More recently, the “China model” for lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty attracted PNG's interest. Stressing that they are concerned with economic development (and not political or security ties), PNG joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2018, and signed up to the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The results are already apparent, with the construction of roads, bridges, universities, hydropower stations, and the state grid. Many other spheres have also developed, in terms of education, cultural exchange, green development, and – most importantly for a country with an inadequate medical system – medical equipment and expertise. Does all this mean that PNG is mired ever deeper in debt? Since PNG has a favourable trade balance with China, its primary trading partner, it sees these developments and economic benefits as a means to move away from borrowing or aid, not to go deeper into debt. It should be no surprise that throughout the many, many articles and letters to the editor in PNG newspapers, the tone on PNG-China relations is distinctly positive.

Turning to Vanuatu, it was first settled by Lapita peoples from the northern Philippines 3000 years ago. It was claimed by Spain (1606), France (1768), and then “shared” by

the French and British from 1906 as “New Hebrides.” As with other Pacific countries, such as the Solomon Islands, half of the population was seized by force for “blackbirding” in the nineteenth century, and colonial rule was exceedingly corrupt, with frequent and often violent resistance. Independence was finally achieved in 1980.

Since China was one of the first countries in the UN to advocate for Vanuatu's independence, the latter established diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1982. In 2019, the relationship was elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership. By the time Wang Yi's delegation arrived in June 2022, the relationship between the two countries was already deep and long-lasting. The government website has versions in English, French, Spanish, and Chinese. From 2020, Mandarin began to be taught as a second language in schools. The main newspaper, *The Daily Post*, has a whole section on Chinese news in Mandarin. When reading some of the English items, one is struck by the way that the shared experience of being developing countries provides a deep connection between Vanuatu and China. As with PNG, there have been person-to-person meetings between the two countries' leadership, and in 2019 Vanuatu signed up to the BRI, along with a host of other agreements. Benefits have been seen in fundamental ways, such as safe drinking water, wharves, road rehabilitation, educational construction, tourism (with a pause from 2020 to 2022), and processing for agricultural and fishing products. Ni-Van students are completing studies in China and returning to contribute with

their newly acquired expertise. As a small country subject to frequent natural disasters, Vanuatu has a National Sustainable Development Plan: 2016-2030, also known as The People's Plan 2030. This plan seeks to lift Vanuatu out of the category of a “Least Developed Country” (LDC). Central to this plan are robust measures for dealing with climate change. Simply put, China is meeting this development need as a priority. That said, Vanuatu pursues a non-aligned foreign policy and does not take sides. As a letter to the editor puts it, “the xenophobic rhetoric that comes out of the US regarding China isn't something we should adopt.” Who calls the shots for any engagement with Vanuatu? As Foreign Minister Ralph Regenvanu observed already in 2019: “Vanuatu's own national interests are paramount in determining our relations with the international community and other states.”

What is it like for Vanuatu to engage directly with the Communist Party of China? Foreign Minister Regenvanu makes this fascinating observation: “The party-to-party relationships between the Communist Party of China and many of the key political parties in Vanuatu, whilst unheard of in the history of our relations with our more traditional partners, attest to a relationship that traverses differences in political ideologies and in cultural and bureaucratic norms, and is an interesting ‘value-add’ to the relationship of many of our leaders with China.”

Next week part two on Fiji and Micronesia. ✪

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# CP OF INDIA LEADS PROTEST BY LANDLESS AT WARANGAL

Takkalapally Srinivas Rao

**In a bid to escalate *Bhu Poratam* (struggle for land), the landless poor, led by the Communist Party of India (CPI) staged a massive protest at Ekasila Park in Hanumakonda.**

Speaking at the *dharna* (sit-in), CPI national secretary K Narayana questioned whether the ruling party wanted to distribute land for the shelter-less poor or support the realtors who were encroaching upon the government land. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) whose promise to provide double bedroom houses to the poor is yet to be fulfilled, even after eight years, said Narayana. Additionally, Narayana accused the State government of threatening the poor who want a piece of land for

their dwelling. The CPI is waging a war against the government for a justifiable cause: land for the poor. However, the government is trying to suppress the agitation by using the police force, which is uncalled for, Narayana said.

It's horrendous to see the attacks against the CPI cadres who were trying to protect the government land from land grabbers. All that the CPI wants the government to do is to distribute land to the poor and save their self-respect, he said. He threatened to intensify the agitation if the government supports the land encroachers.

Warangal has always been a centre of agitations, and the CPI will intensify the *Bhu Poratam* until the government concedes to its demand, Narayana said. The cadres are ready to go to jail but they are destined to succeed in their

endeavour, he added. "There is no alternative either to live in the huts or in the prison," Narayana said.

"The CPI is ready to take up an armed rebellion if the government continues to ignore the disadvantaged sections," the senior CPI leader threatened. Narayana ridiculed the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's plan to enter national politics. KCR who cannot look after Telangana wants to make his presence felt on the national stage, he said.

The police who intervened stopped the rally that was heading to Hanumakonda Collectorate. However, they allowed Narayana, CPI state secretariat member Takkalapally Srinivas Rao, and others to submit memorandums to the Warangal and Hanumakonda collectors. Senior leader Nedunuri Jyothy, Warangal and Hanumakonda district secretaries Mekala Ravi and Karre Bikshapathi [...] were also present.

*New Age Weekly* ✪



CPI State secretariat member Takkalapally Srinivas Rao addressing the protest in Warangal.

**The cadres are ready to go to jail.**

## BRICS PARTNERSHIP TO HELP REBUILD SOUTH AFRICA: RAMAPHOSA

**South Africa can gain much from participation in BRICS as it works to rebuild the country in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Monday in his weekly communication to citizens.**

The value of South Africa's membership of BRICS has grown "substantially" since it joined the group 12 years ago, he wrote ahead of the 14th BRICS Summit scheduled for Thursday. BRICS is the acronym for an emerging-market bloc that groups Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

The summit will be held in virtual format under the theme of "Foster High-quality BRICS Partnership, Usher in a New Era for Global Development." Ramaphosa outlined the benefits and potential of BRICS partnership in various fields, including trade, tourism, infrastructure, business ties, health and food security.

He said total trade between South Africa and the other four BRICS countries reached US\$43.8 billion in 2021, up from

US\$30.4 billion in 2017, and that tourists from other BRICS countries accounted for 65 percent of all arrivals in South Africa in 2018.

The summit aims to usher in a "new era" for global development that is more inclusive, sustainable and fair, Ramaphosa said.

"Through the reform of the multilateral system, including the United Nations, and by refocusing the attention and resources of the global community on the sustainable development agenda, the BRICS group can support a sustained and equitable global recovery," he said.

The summit is a valuable platform for South Africa to strengthen ties with its partner countries in support of its own growth and employment creation, and provides South Africa an opportunity to contribute to a better world, in which all countries have a better chance to recover from the pandemic and to flourish.

*teleSUR* ✪

## CAMBODIAN NEWSPAPER SPOTLIGHTS 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF PM'S PATH TO TOPPLE POL POT REGIME

**The Phnom Penh-based English-language newspaper *Khmer Times* has reported on the ceremony marking the 45th anniversary of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen's path to overthrow the Pol Pot genocidal regime, which took place on 20th June.**

The paper said the Cambodian leader and his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Minh Chinh attended the event in Koh Thmor village, Tonlong commune, Memot district, Tboung Khmum province.

Hun Sen reportedly recalled the same day forty-five years ago when he decided to begin his national salvation journey. He was quoted as saying he never forgot the time

being away from his homeland and what the Cambodian people had to endure.

The Cambodian Government leader also expressed his gratitude for Vietnamese leaders and people's assistance for and contributions to Cambodia's liberation from the genocidal regime.

Lauding the neighbouring nations' friendship and cooperation, he affirmed that Vietnamese support reflected a pure and sound friendship shared between the two peoples, adding he believes such ties will last forever.

On 20th June 20, 1977, Hun Sen, then twenty-five years old, and his four comrades crossed Kampong Cham province (now

Tbong Khmum) to enter Vietnam to establish a force to liberate Cambodia and its people. He founded the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation the following year.

Together with Vietnamese volunteer soldiers, the force completely defeated the genocidal regime on the 7th January, 1979, bringing back peace to the nation and the people.

The paper quoted Hun Sen's post on his official Facebook page as saying the Ministry of National Defence of Cambodia has been tasked with organising this event every year to remind the next generation of the historical occasion.

*Nhân Dân* ✪

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Editor: Franc Stregone

Published by  
**Guardian Publications Australia Ltd**  
74 Buckingham St,  
Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by  
**Spotpress**  
24-26 Lillian Fowler Pl  
Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment  
is taken by **T Pearson**,  
74 Buckingham St,  
Surry Hills, 2010

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# UNIONS BACK RAIL WORKERS AS LARGEST INDUSTRIAL ACTION ON THE RAILWAYS FOR A GENERATION BEGINS

**Unions and campaigners have expressed solidarity for striking rail workers after last-ditch talks with railway companies failed to find a settlement to the dispute which begins on Tuesday 22nd June.**

Thousands of members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (RMT) at Network Rail and thirteen train operators were set to walk out Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday in the biggest outbreak of industrial action on the railways for a generation.

It comes after eleventh-hour talks fell through with both sides remaining deadlocked over a deal.

The RMT said rail companies were "attacking" the Railway Pension Scheme and the Transport for London scheme, diluting benefits, making staff work longer and making them poorer in retirement, while having to pay increased contributions.

The union said thousands of jobs were being cut across the rail network with no guarantee of no compulsory redundancies.

Officials also claimed work practices were being changed and disputes over the role and responsibility of the guard were being restarted.

Ticket office closures were also being planned, said the RMT.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has been slammed for failing to help find a settlement to the dispute over protecting jobs

and services and for a pay rise that keeps pace with the soaring cost of inflation.

It comes after a huge show of support for the RMT from protesters at the massive Trade Union Congress (TUC)-organised demonstration through central London on Saturday 18th June.

TUC deputy general secretary Paul Nowak said: "Grant Shapps needs to stop messing around."

"You can't get that negotiated settlement if the government and employers insist on imposing job cuts and pay cuts unilaterally."

Public and Commercial Services Union General Secretary Mark Serwotka also slammed Shapps as "a shocking Secretary of State".

He said: "Most people will accept that this disruption is not down to workers who will now lose pay by withdrawing their labour."

"It's down to the government who are allowing the strike to go ahead."

Communications Workers Union General Secretary Dave Ward told the *Star*: "On behalf of the CWU, I send our solidarity and best wishes to every RMT member today."

"The decision to strike is never taken lightly, but RMT members were never going to accept an agenda of pay cuts for workers and payouts for bosses."

National Education Union Joint General Secretary Kevin Courtney said: "Working

people deserve a pay rise and job security at work.

"This includes rail workers as well as education staff."

"No-one welcomes disruption, and workers never easily vote for strike action."

"It is in the government's gift to avert strike action; they should stop boycotting the negotiations."

RMT Assistant General Secretary John Leach lambasted the silence from Labour and said the union wanted more support from the party.

He also accused the government of "abjectly failing" in its responsibilities.

Leach said: "We want political support wherever it can come from and the Labour Party really should refocus here on its responsibility to represent those in society that are looking for a better situation."

"But we'd also like the government to rise to the occasion."

"They are absolutely abjectly failing in their responsibilities. They are nowhere to be seen apart from name-calling from the sidelines."

"They need to do the right thing for the railway people of Britain."

Shadow Transport Secretary Louise Haigh claimed: "We are on the side of both the public and these rail workers."

She called on the government to help settle the dispute.



"It's not possible for them to find a resolution and avoid the dispute without the government being represented at the talks, setting a mandate for the train operators and providing genuine scope in order to find a resolution," Haigh said.

Cat Hobbs, director of public ownership campaigners We Own It, said: "The government's plan to close 1,000-plus ticket offices and cut 2,500 maintenance jobs is not only unconscionable as ticket prices skyrocket, it also makes passengers less safe."

"Grant Shapps should be improving services, not making them worse."

"The RMT are not only fighting a cost-of-living squeeze, but for the very future of our railway system."

Morning Star ✪

## NATO CHIEF PREDICTS PROTRACTED UKRAINE WAR, MIRRORS DIVIDED BLOC

**In an interview with the German newspaper *Bild*, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg warned that the Ukraine war could last for years and the West must prepare for it. He then urged Western countries to "not cease to support Ukraine" despite high costs.**

The fire of war has raged in Ukraine for almost four months. Stoltenberg's prediction sounds more like a plan and a wish of NATO, a military alliance that can profit from the prolonged war in Ukraine.

Chinese military expert and TV commentator Song Zhongping told the *Global Times* that what could last for years, in fact, is the state of confrontation between Moscow and Kiev.

"Such a state can stall Russia and will eventually weaken

Russia, just as NATO and the US have anticipated," Song said.

As for how long the war could last, the answer lies in how much more military aid the West can provide Ukraine because the Ukrainian military alone has no capability to engage in a dragged-out military conflict.

However, it is naive for Stoltenberg to expect all NATO members to help Ukraine against Russia. After all, the NATO Secretary General has no right to order thirty sovereign countries to follow his lead to boost support for Ukraine.

Song claims that there is no way for NATO to form a joint effort to prepare for a prolonged war with Russia because most NATO members supporting Ukraine have already felt exhausted and frustrated.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Saturday expressed concerns that a bit of "Ukraine fatigue" is starting to set in around the world.

Some countries supporting Ukraine since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war are feeling increasingly overwhelmed if they continue aiding Ukraine. For many, the war in Ukraine is like a bottomless pit that keeps requesting more input while giving nothing back.

A recent survey conducted in ten European countries showed that even though the support for Ukraine remained strong, the concerns of people in these countries have shifted to the broader effects of the ongoing conflict. Many are quite worried about the potential higher cost of living resulting from the war.

Moreover, a deepening division has come into being between those who want a quick end to the Ukraine war and those who want Russia punished.

In a *Los Angeles Times* opinion piece entitled "War in Ukraine is a battle of wills and economic pain – and the West is showing fatigue," the author writes, "Even in the United States, however, inflation has eroded public support for the war."

According to an *Associated Press* poll in April, the majority of US voters called for tough sanctions against Russia regardless of possible US economic pains. But one month later, most people gave limiting damage to the US economy the top priority.

Stoltenberg is pushing the West, mainly Europe, to even

greater suffering in terms of economy and society. He seems to have forgotten the high costs that he wants the whole West to disregard will have to be paid in the end by many Western countries and their people. It is totally irresponsible for him to do so.

As NATO faces the Ukraine war, what it claimed to be "the greatest security crisis in a generation," the alliance extended Stoltenberg's term as the Secretary General in March by a year.

"In this extra year, Stoltenberg just wants more political success. But his wishes are very difficult to come true," Song commented.

*Global Times* ✪



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