

# Solidarity

Issue No. 93 / August 2016

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## From Don Dale to Nauru



# TORTURED BY A RACIST SYSTEM



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## EMAIL

[solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

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# SOLIDARITY: WHO ARE WE?

Solidarity is a socialist group with branches across Australia. We are opposed to the madness of capitalism, which is plunging us into global recession and misery at the same time as wrecking the planet's future. We are taking the first steps towards building an organisation that can help lead the fight for an alternative system based on mass democratic planning, in the interests of human need not profit.

As a crucial part of this, we are committed to building social movements and the wider left, through throwing ourselves into struggles for social justice, against racism and to strengthen the confidence of rank and file unionists.

Solidarity is a member of the International Socialist Tendency. Visit our web site at [www.solidarity.net.au/about-us](http://www.solidarity.net.au/about-us) for more information on what we stand for.

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## SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

### Sydney

Sydney Solidarity meets 6.30pm every Thursday at Brown St Hall, Brown St, Newtown  
For more information contact:  
Erima on 0432 221 516  
[sydney@solidarity.net.au](mailto:sydney@solidarity.net.au)

### Melbourne

Melbourne Solidarity meets fortnightly at 6pm Second Floor Union House, Melbourne Uni  
For more information contact:  
Feiyi on 0416 121 616  
[melbourne@solidarity.net.au](mailto:melbourne@solidarity.net.au)

### Perth

For more information contact:  
Phil on 0423 696 312

### Brisbane

For more information contact:  
Mark on 0439 561 196 or  
[brisbane@solidarity.net.au](mailto:brisbane@solidarity.net.au)

### Canberra

For more information contact:  
Geraldine on 0458 039 596 or  
[canberra@solidarity.net.au](mailto:canberra@solidarity.net.au)

### Magazine office

Phone 02 9211 2600  
Fax 02 9211 6155  
[solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

## Things they say

**It's good to see that you're, you know, taking this up and working**  
Pauline Hanson's response on learning that an SBS cameraman was Aboriginal

**He took note of everything I said and was very interested in my opinion**  
Hanson on her first meeting with Malcolm Turnbull

**His interest in Indigenous affairs has really got to be questioned—and why he doesn't take note of the various reports that are out there**  
Co-chair of Reconciliation Australia  
Tom Calma on Indigenous Affairs  
Minister Nigel Scullion

**I don't think it's as terrible as the unions make out, so at this stage I think I'd support it**  
NSW One Nation Senator Brian Burston on the ABCC

**Malcolm-Ieuan: Roberts., the living soul**  
How Queensland One Nation Senator Malcolm Roberts described himself in a bizarre affidavit to Julia Gillard opposing the carbon tax

**This smacks too much of the Jewish world conspiracy theorising I've always loathed**  
Andrew Bolt disassociating himself from Malcolm Roberts in 2012

**They need to give way to modern young people, including young people in professions like business and law who are keen on changing society for the better.**  
Bob Brown shows his class bias in his hectoring advice to the NSW Greens

**I just feel like the Clintons have betrayed me over and over**  
Kirk Voorhees, a 56-year-old truck driver and Bernie Sanders supporter on why he won't be voting for Hillary

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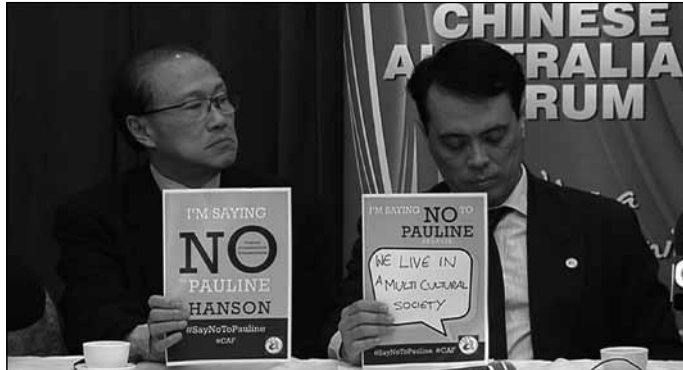


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# INSIDE THE \$Y\$TEM

## Cops draw guns on black Pokemon Go player

A BLACK man's Pokemon Go game ended abruptly in Iowa when four police officers confronted him with guns drawn in July. Faith Ekakitie, from the University of Iowa football team, was playing Pokemon Go in Iowa City Park. Ekakitie said he was "happy to be alive" after the police surrounded him without warning.

The six foot football player was profiled as fitting the description of another black man who allegedly robbed a nearby bank.

According to Ekakitie, "Not once did they identify themselves to me as Iowa City Police officers, but with four gun barrels staring me in the face, I wouldn't dare question the authority of the men and woman in front of me ... My pockets were checked, my backpack was opened up and searched carefully, and I was asked to lift up my shirt while they searched my waistband". He wrote that he, "could very well [have] become another statistic on this day."

## NSW prison population at record levels

HARSH NEW bail laws have been driving record levels of incarceration and overcrowding in NSW prisons. The laws have led to a massive 9 per cent increase in the prison population between April 2015 and May 2016 by pushing up the number of prisoners on remand. Prisons are bulging at the seams, with one corrective services document suggesting that mattresses be put on the floor.

The overcrowding is leading to violence. In January this year fights between inmates were up by 41 per cent compared to the same month in 2015.

All the evidence indicates that imprisonment increases the likelihood of someone re-offending—NSW currently has the worst rates of re-offending in the country. Liberal Corrections Minister David Eliot is using the disaster he created to bolster his agenda of prison privatisation by threatening to privatise prisons that don't reduce re-offending rates.

## The "exclusion games" begin in Rio de Janeiro



DEMONSTRATORS WILL converge on the opening ceremony of the Rio Olympics to protest the social disaster that has accompanied the games. All up 77,000 favela dwellers have been displaced, 2500 people have been killed by police since Rio won the right to the games and the environment has been trashed.

A golf course that was built on the Marapendi nature reserve symbolises the destruction. The cost of the games is estimated to be around \$16 billion. This immense expenditure has been paid for through savage cuts to health and education. Hospitals have been closed and students have been forced to occupy their schools to defend their education, while a fortune is poured into the Olympic circus by Mayor Eduardo Paes.

## Young Libs in Vocational Education Scam

AT THE same time as the Liberal Education Minister Simon Birmingham is making a show of cracking down on the corrupt vocational education sector, prominent Young Liberals have been caught profiting from scams in the sector.

A prominent Young Liberal freshly minted from Melbourne Grammar has set up a company linked to predatory education brokers and data mining. The company, Spot Distributors, is owned by 23-year-old Jake Foster. Until May this year it was co-owned by his friend Paul Mitchell who sits on the Liberal Party state administrative committee in Victoria.

The job search website jobify.com.au listed Spot Distributors as its owner until July this year. The website gathered the data entered by job-seekers and sold it to brokers, who then used it to sell them diploma courses funded by government loans. Fairfax visited the site several times in July and found it had no contact numbers for employers and no working links to jobs.

Foster also previously owned a company called Go Careers that sold diplomas for another company called Careers Australia. Careers Australia had to pay back \$44 million after it admitted to "unconscionable conduct" in May. It sold people \$20,000 diplomas by promising them free laptops. A spokesperson for Paul Mitchell claimed that, "Mr Mitchell upholds the highest standards in the community".

Research and writing by  
Adam Adelpour

Send suggestions for INSIDE  
THE SYSTEM to [solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

## Police could ban people from mosques on a whim

DRACONIAN NEW police powers passed in NSW could see people prevented from attending mosques and other locations purely on the basis of police suspicion. The dramatic new "crime prevention" orders give cops the power to restrict people's movements, limit who they associate with and who they work for and can even prevent their access to the internet. The orders are similar to those imposed on terror suspects but can be applied to anyone suspected of being associated with a serious crime. An order can be sought against someone even if they have not been convicted of any crime or have been acquitted. Breaching an order could bring five years in prison or a \$33,000 fine.

The Liberal government rejected Labor amendments to increase judicial oversight. The Greens' David Shoebridge proposed these orders, as well as the new "public safety orders" be scrapped. The suggestion that the orders could prevent people from going to church saw the Liberals' leader in the legislative council, Duncan Gay, yell out "The police like churches." When Shoebridge raised that people could be unfairly prevented from attending mosques there was no interjection.

## US Navy to name ship after gay rights hero

The US plans to name a ship after the gay rights hero Harvey Milk, the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in California. The Military Sealift Command fleet oiler would assist with the transport of military equipment, vehicles, helicopters and ammunition. Although he served in the navy in the 1950s, Milk became an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War and US wars in general.

# EDITORIAL

## Turnbull's weakness our chance to force change

MALCOLM TURNBULL has been left weak and humiliated by the election result.

He is already under pressure from the hard right inside his party. This saw him backflip over nominating Kevin Rudd for the UN Secretary-General's job, leaving him looking vindictive and petty.

But he was also forced to back down over his choice of Brian Martin to run the Royal Commission into juvenile detention in the Northern Territory, in the face of outrage from the Aboriginal community. Martin was forced to resign within days of his appointment.

The Liberals' loss in the final undecided seat of Herbert means they now have the thinnest possible majority of just one vote in the lower house. In the Senate they will have to win support from an even larger crossbench rabble than before the election. Turnbull will not be able to get legislation through unless he has either the support of The Greens, or else both Nick Xenophon and Pauline Hanson's Senators.

This means his government will be unstable and weak. Turnbull will be constantly looking over his shoulder, worried about whether any of his MPs will break ranks and about his electoral popularity. The government will be vulnerable to public pressure.

We need to respond by going on the offensive to pile pressure on them from the left.

Turnbull still plans to reintroduce the anti-union ABCC legislation as one of his first acts in parliament.

Depending on the mood of Nick Xenophon and Pauline Hanson the government may still be able to pass it, either through the Senate or at a joint sitting of both houses.

The unions need to call demonstrations now to put the maximum pressure on every MP and Senator not to vote for the bill. The unions' decision not to raise the issue during the election campaign means far too few people understand the threat to the construction unions. A visible campaign of union stopwork demonstrations can turn this around.

The victory by workers at Coles' Polar Fresh warehouse, who picketed to block trucks, shows what is needed to fight and win.

The Royal Commission into Don Dale and detention in the NT also needs to be a focus for ongoing campaigning and mobilisation. The inquiry is an attempt to bury the is-



**Above: Rallying against the ABCC, which Turnbull still has hopes of passing through parliament**

sue. It will almost certainly find that NT governments, Labor and Liberal, knew about the treatment of Aboriginal kids. Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion, who lives in the NT, also knew. The punitive policies of the NT Intervention and cuts to Aboriginal services are also to blame for worsening the social catastrophe in Aboriginal communities.

The fight for equal marriage can also cause problems for Turnbull, with much of his party vehemently homophobic and opposed to granting marriage rights. He may now struggle to get the support of parliament for his plebiscite on the issue, meaning the demands for a direct vote in parliament will grow.

And there is a looming crisis over offshore detention of refugees. Efforts to speed up the closure of the Manus detention centre are still working their way through the PNG Supreme Court, after it was found to be illegal in April. We need to demand that all those in detention on Manus and Nauru be brought to Australia.

### Fighting Hanson

We have already seen how the election of Pauline Hanson along with four other One Nation Senators will give racism and Islamophobia a greater public platform. Already she has appeared on ABC's Q&A, a new SBS documentary, and news websites like the *Sydney Morning Herald* and news.com.au are republishing her videos from Facebook. *Sunrise* has given

her 20 appearances since September, according to a count by *Media Watch*.

This has already encouraged an increase in racism, with the TV personality Sonia Kruger calling for a ban on Muslim immigration on the *Today* show.

The immediate threat is that anti-Muslim racism will become even more acceptable. Pauline Hanson's return is largely a product of the misery of rising unemployment, spending cuts and the mainstream Islamophobia coming from the Liberals and the mainstream media.

Turnbull is doing his best to continue where Abbott left off, announcing still more "anti-terror" laws. The government now wants to be able to jail terrorism offenders indefinitely, even after their sentences have been served.

There is now a renewed importance to finding ways to counter Islamophobia, through broad based public demonstrations and campaigning to take on the racist lies. We have to fight both Hanson and the mainstream Islamophobia together.

The election result was a rejection of the Liberals' plans for cuts and policies that favour big business and the rich. But it's no use just sitting back and watching as Turnbull tries to deal with his nightmare of internal opposition combined with the Coalition's knife-edge parliamentary numbers. Social movements, unions and the left need to take advantage and step up the fight to finish off Turnbull and the big business agenda he stands for.

.....  
**Turnbull will be constantly looking over his shoulder, worried about whether any of his MPs will break ranks**

# Fight over Greens' direction breaks out over NSW pre-selection

By James Supple

THE NSW Greens are in serious turmoil over the pre-selection for a vacant NSW upper house seat, created by the tragic death of left-wing MP John Kaye from cancer in May.

Thirteen candidates have put themselves forward for the position. The more conservative elements in the NSW branch are backing Justin Field, a former parliamentary staffer who currently works at the NSW Conservation Council.

He has been strongly backed by NSW upper house MP Jeremy Buckingham, who is often at odds with the more left-wing NSW Greens branch. He is the only NSW Greens MP to join the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Israel, and has denounced support for the BDS campaign.

Despite the fact that decisions made at NSW Greens State Delegates Committee (SDC) meetings are meant to be binding on MPs, Buckingham has publicly spoken against NSW Greens' policy.

One of the left pre-selection candidates, Tamara Ryan, has specifically raised the problem of MPs ignoring the SDC decisions.

Five of the left-wing candidates are exchanging preferences to try to ensure that the left vote is not split so that Field could get elected.

In response, Buckingham took to his Facebook page to release a video condemning "factionalism and group voting tickets".

But the accusations of "factionalism" are just hypocrisy. While former leader Bob Brown backed Jeremy Buckingham's attack on "factionalism" in the NSW pre-selection, he used the national media to denounce the NSW Greens and to intervene in the pre-selection fight.

Brown has given interviews to *The Guardian*, *The Monthly* and ABC's 7.30 where he declared, "They need a clean out in NSW". He called for NSW Senator Lee Rhiannon to stand down, blaming her and the left-wing leadership of the NSW Greens for disappointing federal election results, saying NSW is being "held back by the old guard".

The Greens' electoral results in inner city Melbourne seats, where they recorded significant improvements, are being held up as a model in order to criticise the party's performance in NSW.



**Above: NSW Greens members including Lee Rhiannon, marching on May Day**

The Greens' campaign model in Melbourne was based on a single-minded electoralism, based on door-knocking, calling voters for months in advance of the election and tailoring election messages in each electorate to maximise votes. This kind of approach comes at the expense of any serious effort to build social movements and is dragging The Greens to the right.

## NSW branch

NSW is the most left-wing Greens' state branch. In the past NSW delegates have clashed with other parts of the national party over issues like funding for private schools and their call for the party leader to be elected by the membership.

But the NSW preselection shows the lack of serious organisation by the left inside the NSW Greens. Rival left candidates are running against each other, whereas the conservative grouping has been able to come behind a single candidate. The left needs to be organised if it is going to effectively fight the right of the party.

Following the public attacks on the NSW branch, John Kaye's partner, Lynne Joslyn, took the extraordinary step of publicly revealing that John had serious disagreements with Justin Field and, "feared that if Justin was elected he would betray John's legacy because he did not share John's views on collective action, working in solidarity with the party or social justice."

John Kaye was amongst the most principled and left-wing of The Greens' MPs. In a final message to Greens members he argued that, "the

critical outcome for the Greens is to not be caught into parliamentarianism ..." Fighting neo-liberalism and addressing the climate crisis, "can only be grown by the work we do, not as an aspiring opposition, but as an aspiring agent of social change", he said.

But even among the left preselection candidates, the prime focus has been on parliamentary representation.

Leading figures in the NSW Greens acknowledge the importance of movements outside parliament. But they see them as a supplementary force that The Greens work and gain support from, instead of recognising that it is movements outside parliament that drive and win social change.

Even in NSW, running in elections and work in parliament makes up most of what The Greens do.

Greens leader Richard Di Natale has not directly involved himself in the NSW dispute but has admitted that he wants to take the party in a more pragmatic direction. And Bob Brown is a stalking horse for taking the party further to the right.

Encouragingly, hundreds of Greens members have signed a letter rejecting Bob Brown's intervention in the NSW party.

Everyone on the left has an interest in ensuring that the right's candidate, Justin Field, is rejected. But the question of what sort of party The Greens should be is still unresolved. Becoming a clearly left-wing party depends on relating to the working class and building movements outside of parliament, not electoralism focused on winning more MPs.

**NSW is the most left-wing Greens' state branch. In the past NSW delegates have clashed with other parts of the national party**

# Keep up the pressure to shut Manus and Nauru

By Ian Rintoul

A JOINT report from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch has damned Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers on Nauru.

The report issued on 3 August has pushed refugees and offshore processing back onto the mainstream political agenda.

"What I found on Nauru is what I can only describe as a deliberate, systematic abuse," said Amnesty researcher, Anna Neistat who spent several days on Nauru interviewing scores of asylum seekers and refugees. Forty-nine children remain in detention in the family camp RPC3.

Before Amnesty slipped into Nauru in July, it had made six official requests to visit since 2012—all rejected or ignored.

Unlike *A Current Affair*'s approved visit to Nauru during the election campaign, Amnesty and Human Rights Watch were not escorted by Australian or Nauruan officials or the Australian Federal Police. The Amnesty report calls for the government to, 'immediately resettle the refugees in Australia and close the Nauru offshore processing centre.'

The report confirms the worst of what is already known about the circumstances of asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru.

It documents medical neglect by health workers and other service providers, sexual assaults, and "dire mental health problems and overwhelming despair".

More than 20 of the 58 people interviewed had been attacked by locals. Refugees are preyed upon, attacked and robbed with impunity.

The day after publication of the report, one more refugee was flown from Nauru to Australia for medical treatment. Scores of others are still waiting.

And the daily protests on Nauru continue. The Amnesty report coincided with the 137th day of protest in the family camp.

Meanwhile the situation on Manus Island grows more desperate and bizarre by the day. The detention centre, ruled unlawful by the PNG Supreme Court on 26 April, continues to operate.

The PNG government says the detention centre is open and that the



**Above: Refugees and asylum seekers on Manus Island hold a ceremony to commemorate Kamil Hussein**

"residents" can come and go. Yet the "residents" remain under the control of Australia, and are not free to leave Manus Island. On 28 July one Iranian asylum seeker was arrested at the Manus airport when he tried to fly to Port Moresby.

The few refugees who did make it to Port Moresby since April are either living in poverty on the outskirts of the city or, unable to survive at all, have had to return to Manus.

## Manus court case

As the PNG Supreme Court case drags on, the legal limbo is taking a terrible toll. After three years many refugees are collapsing under the metal strain. In the first week of August, another two were medivacced from Manus to Australia.

The Australia government is desperate to obstruct and delay the court. When the Supreme Court

called for an Australian representative to attend the court to explain its plans for the refugees, not one Australian representative was within cooee of the court.

Even the officials from the Australian High Commission, who normally attend every court hearing, were nowhere to be seen.

The court process however is frustratingly opaque. The Supreme Court ruled in April that all the asylum seekers were unlawfully brought to PNG, yet now the court is asking which country is responsible for the asylum seekers and refugees on Manus.

Lawyers for the detainees are arguing for their unconditional release from Manus and for their return to Australia.

The tragic drowning death of Kamil Hussain, a 33-year-old Pakistani refugee, at a local waterfall has also thrown a pall across Manus. He should never have been there. Kamil should have died a free man.

But desperate to avoid its responsibility for the Manus hell, the Australian government would not lift a finger to arrange for Kamil's body to be returned to Pakistan.

Their refusal disgusted and angered refugees and many Manus locals. Their protests stopped the moves to bury Kamil on Manus, with unseemly haste.

The Pakistan government may have stepped into the breach to make arrangements for the body; but the Australian government is left bereft of any shred of decency.

Australia's offshore detention regime is crumbling. There are now over 320 people who have been brought from Nauru and Manus Island for medical treatment in Australia. Although one person has been sent to Christmas Island, until now, the government has not tried to send anyone back to Manus or Nauru.

But it is going to take more determined action here to end it once and for all.

In the aftermath of an election that pushed Turnbull to the brink of defeat, the refugee campaign needs to renew its efforts to break Labor's support for offshore detention. The demonstrations in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne on Saturday 27 August to close the camps and bring them here are an important part of that action.

**More than 20 of the 58 people interviewed on Nauru had been attacked by locals**



## Pull out all stops as CPSU starts new round of strike action

CPSU MEMBERS in the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) will kick off a new wave of industrial action across the Australian Public Service (APS) starting Friday 12 August.

Staff at international airports will strike for 24 hours, supported by those in the Department of Agriculture (many working at airports) who will hold one hour stop work meetings. The Maritime Unit will hold rolling stoppages.

From 15 August, there will be rolling strikes at airports and workplaces in the Department of Human Services (Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support).

It won't stop there. Other public servants will join in, with members meetings in Tax and other agencies at end of August, culminating in a major APS-wide strike on 9 September, including rallies.

The union is continuing a campaign that started more than two years ago for decent wages and conditions across the APS. More than 75 per cent of APS staff, more than 100,000 workers, have not had a pay rise for more than three years.

Our conditions remain under threat from Malcolm Turnbull and Public Service Minister Michaelia Cash whose policy demands loss of working conditions for below-inflation pay rises.

The government refuses to seriously negotiate over new EBAs. Instead the last two years saw farcical "bargaining meetings" with managers hamstrung by the government policy on what they can offer staff. Cash has met only once with the union.

There won't be any genuine negotiations unless effective industrial action forces the government to listen and respond. The upcoming action needs to continue until mass meetings decide next steps.

### Union strategy

The union leadership has a three-pronged approach. Industrial action will accompany a hearing in the Fair Work Commission which will seek to force the government to adhere to "good faith bargaining" rules.

According to CPSU National Secretary Nadine Flood, breaches by the government include, "the Minister refusing to meet with the CPSU, misrepresenting the union's position and engaging in capricious conduct that undermines collective bargaining."



**Above: CPSU members on strike last year**

But the good faith bargaining rules are weak, and only require employers to, for instance, meet the union and respond to proposals. They do not require the employer to make a reasonable offer or agree to any union proposals.

Secondly, she said: "Where bad agreements are put to staff, our members will continue asking all their co-workers to keep voting them down." Unprecedented ballot outcomes of nearly 90 per cent "no" have sent a clear message that union members have the support of non-unionists (most agencies have only around 30 per cent union density.)

Finally, the union will continue to, "take the campaign in to the electorates ... to keep the pressure on the Government to fix this mess ... and holding MPs and Senators to account on supporting public services and the people who provide them."

The renewed union campaign is causing much discussion and enthusiasm. The union in the ABS for Interviewers will produce a regular monthly newsletter to inform home-based members. Workers at the Bureau of Meteorology are planning to take photos at their workplace of solidarity messages to the DIBP strikers.

Last time strikes were held at airports the government successfully applied for an injunction stopping the action "in the national interest". These injunctions need to be defied if they are imposed again, or at least met with protest by workers across the ABS.

Delegates and activists must be

involved in planning and leading action, so that we build up confidence and organisation. Some delegates in Victoria have called for combined agency delegates meetings and mass meetings to prepare for and plan industrial action.

However, the union still shies away from involving members in this way, with the top officials simply directing the action.

The union argues that members will not show up to meetings. But the only mass meeting we've had, over a year ago, was an incredible success, the high point of the campaign. And without meetings the union will never build up the larger activist base it needs.

Less than half of public servants are in the union. But voting in the ballots on agreements shows that the union can influence other workers and lead beyond the membership.

When we have strike days we need to hold pickets at the front of buildings to discourage non-members from working and encourage them to join the union.

As CPSU National Secretary Nadine Flood said: "The Turnbull Government's attack on public services such as Medicare nearly cost it the election. It's well and truly past time for the Prime Minister and Minister Cash to rethink their harsh and unreasonable industrial war on the people delivering these and other services."

The union understands the weak situation of the government. Now is the time to pull out all stops for industrial action.

**CPSU delegates, Melbourne**

.....  
**There won't be any genuine negotiations unless effective industrial action forces the government to respond**



# Polar Fresh pickets win gains in strike against Coles

By Jason Wong

AFTER A decisive three day strike, workers at a cold storage warehouse for Coles in Melbourne have won wage rises and more secure jobs.

The 650 workers set up a lively picket at the site in Truganina, West Melbourne, complete with tents, kitchens and music. Contingency sites at Clayton, Laverton and Derrimut, set up by Coles in an effort to circumvent strike action, were also blockaded. These tactics ensured that the supermarket giant felt the pinch quickly, leaving empty shelves at outlets across Victoria and threatening millions in potential profits.

After Coles and Polar Fresh both won Supreme Court injunctions against the “illegal” blockades of the contingency sites, the union lifted them. Meanwhile, the strike enjoyed shows of solidarity from other NUW workplaces as well as other unions including the MUA, CFMEU and NTEU.

Faced with short shifts, uncertain rosters and fluctuating wages, the workers sought a \$3 an hour increase, demanding a \$30 hourly wage and the conversion of casuals to full-time work. Polar Fresh, their employer, was accused of operating a “model of under-employment”. Workers complained of shifts that could be rearranged at as little as an hour’s notice.

“I can start off a week with four shifts rostered, and then I can end up with one and a half shifts”, Ross Hibble, employed as a labour hire casual at the site, told *The Age*. “It puts enormous pressure on people like me. I often have to rely on handouts from friends to pay rent and pay bills.”

Earlier in the month, 94 per cent of workers at the centre voted in favour of protected industrial action. On the morning of 27 July, after six months of negotiations between the National Union of Workers (NUW) and Polar Fresh, they walked out on strike.

Polar Fresh yielded on the evening of 29 July. The workers have won average yearly wage increases of 4.75 per cent, reaching \$31 an hour not immediately but by 2019, 50 permanent full time and 70 labour hire agency workers converted to direct employment with ongoing conversion rights for labour hire casuals, plus paid breaks, rostered days off and double time for overtime after two hours. Further legal action against the NUW



**Above: Polar Fresh workers hold a mass meeting outside the warehouse**

and its members was also dropped.

As one NUW member noted, this strike was a fightback against the casualisation creeping across the

workforce today. The lesson is that hitting the bosses hard with militant mass pickets that cut off their profits is the way to win.

## CUB workers offered jobs back with 65 per cent pay cut

MAINTENANCE WORKERS have been picketing the Carlton & United Breweries (CUB) plant in Melbourne for the past seven weeks after they were sacked and offered their jobs back with a 65 per cent pay cut.

The 55 fitters and electricians were employed at the Abbotsford plant through a contractor. CUB sacked them and offered workers individual contracts on a non-union EBA with another contractor, Programmed, that barely complies with the award.

Scabs are being transported in and out of the brewery in buses with blacked out windows, but production has declined 35 per cent since the sackings. The scab workers are unable to fix the machines.

The union that covers the fitters, the AMWU, says that the company stockpiled weeks of beer supply in preparation for the sackings.

One member said, “We wanted them to put more people on, they wouldn’t, they worked us 12 hours and even 16 hour shifts but now they’ve left us with nothing, sacked with no real notice.”

Troy Gray, State Secretary of the ETU, which covers the electricians, told *The Age*, “This will be a war of attrition. Those that can endure will

win this dispute, and we will win it.” But CUB is Australia’s second largest beer supplier. SABMiller, CUB’s parent company, made \$4.4 billion in operating profit in 2015.

The company has the money to win a war of attrition. Five workers have already gone back to work accepting the cut in wages and conditions. The longer the dispute continues the more difficult it will be to keep workers united in the protest.

But the plant also employs several hundred other workers and is highly unionised. There would be huge support if they all stopped work in solidarity with the sacked ETU and AMWU members. This could stop anything going in or out of the brewery. The unions have refused to do this because it would breach industrial laws and risk fines. But the law has to be defied in order to win.

CUB will only cave when its profits are seriously threatened. That will take united action by the entire brewery workforce.

**Lachlan Marshall**

You can show solidarity by visiting the picket on Southampton Crescent, Abbotsford or making a collection at work. See [www.etuvic.com.au/content/cub-workers](http://www.etuvic.com.au/content/cub-workers) for details

**Contingency sites set up by Coles in an effort to circumvent strike action were also blockaded**

# WA government confirms plans to close communities

By Lachlan Marshall

THE WA government has confirmed plans to halt services to hundreds of remote Aboriginal communities and to force residents to move to larger towns.

In November 2014 Western Australian Premier Colin Barnett announced plans for the forced closure of 150 of 274 “unsustainable” remote Aboriginal communities. In the face of nation-wide protests he was forced to backtrack, promising consultation with communities and a review.

The resulting report, *Resilient Families, Strong Communities: A roadmap for regional and remote Aboriginal communities*, was released in July.

While it does not propose the bulldozing of communities, as seen in Oombulgurri in 2014, its proposals will just as surely strangle remote communities.

It explicitly outlines plans to stop supplying safe drinking water and power to communities.

And it admits that basic services other Australians take for granted—like sewerage, road maintenance and housing, are already non-existent in many communities.

The basic complaint of the report is that it costs more to provide for Aboriginal people living in regional and remote communities.

It proposes streamlining investment into ten larger towns, which, along with town-based reserves, will receive upgrades to housing and services. The government will only invest in towns with educational and employment prospects, while smaller communities will be left to become “self-sufficient.”

The report is explicit that: “In concentrating on towns and larger communities, the state government expects to support fewer communities over time, particularly as migration away from small outstations continues. However, the state government will not prevent Aboriginal people from living remotely or continuing to access country for cultural purposes.”

People can choose to live where they want. They just won’t have any of their basic needs provided for if they choose to live on country.

WA Greens MP Robin Chapple described the proposals as “the removal of people off country by stealth.”

The report begins by describing



**Above: The WA government promised consultation with Aboriginal communities to silence protests last year, but still wants communities to close**

the significantly worse health, employment and education outcomes for Aboriginal people living in regional and remote areas, stressing the challenges of remoteness.

In fact, residents in remote communities are healthier than Aboriginal people living in townships. And of course this remoteness doesn’t prevent some of the world’s largest mines prospering in these areas.

The report flags ten “priority actions” to start over the next two years.

The WA government will spend \$26 million over three years on the Kimberley Schools Project. But the report acknowledges that Aboriginal students wanting to attend secondary school will have to board away from home.

To address the chronic state of housing the WA government will set up an Aboriginal Housing Fund with up to \$200 million available over four years—but only in communities with “strong economic prospects.”

Disgracefully, the government will focus on “transitional housing rather than public or community housing.” This means there will be no increase in ongoing affordable housing and instead families will only get housing on a short-term basis before they are left at the mercy of what the report acknowledges is an unaffordable private housing market.

### Punitive policies

The report also calls for new punitive measures against Aboriginal people living on welfare.

Access to “transitional housing” is

contingent on at least one parent being employed and an 85 per cent school attendance rate.

Under the heading “better living conditions” the report outlines plans to charge Aboriginal households for utilities where currently many are not because land is communally owned.

Public housing tenants receiving income support will be forced onto the Commonwealth government’s Compulsory Rent Deduction Scheme.

Indigenous welfare recipients will have to work 25 hours per week for the dole on Community Development Projects.

Kara Keys, ACTU Indigenous officer, said that this, “entrenches people into welfare dependency because if you’re working for 25 hours a week, then how do you have time to look for a job, and if you’re required to do this week in week out then how is this breaking the welfare cycle.”

Another “priority action” is the continuation of the Cashless Debit Card Trial in the East Kimberley, a policy that humiliates and disempowers people by controlling their income.

Politicians blame Aboriginal culture for the appalling conditions created by government policies. They aim to sever Aboriginal people’s connection with their land and assimilate them into the mainstream capitalist economy.

The answer is simple. Remote indigenous communities should receive government support for the services and infrastructure that most other Australians take for granted.

**People can choose to live where they want. They just won’t have any of their basic needs provided for**

# Black Lives Matter protests rage against racist police

By Mark Gillespie

THOUSANDS HAVE taken to the streets of US cities in a new wave of Black Lives Matter protests, enraged by the police murder of two more black men.

Millions of people have viewed the shocking videos of the two deaths. One shows Alton Sterling being shot several times while pinned to the ground by two white police officers. According to witnesses, Alton never wielded his gun or threatened the officers.

Philando Castile was pulled over and shot while driving with his girlfriend and her four-year-old daughter. Philando's girlfriend immediately started live-streaming. She said Philando, "let the officer know that he had a firearm and he was reaching for his wallet and the officer just shot him in his arm".

Young black males are nine times more likely to be the victims of police killings in the US.

This is just part of everyday discrimination from police. Blacks account for 35 per cent of drug arrests and 55 per cent of convictions even though they are only 14 per cent of the population and use and sell drugs at equal rates to whites. Blacks are disproportionately pulled over while driving and three times more likely to be searched. And they are over-represented on death row.

Using street demonstrations, die-ins, and blocking traffic, the Black Lives Matter movement has put the US police's callous disregard for black lives in the national spotlight.

In January 2015, following the murder of Michael Brown, 56 per cent of white Americans saw police violence as the result of "isolated" incidents. In just three months, following the murder of Freddie Grey, that figure had plunged to 36 per cent.

Thousands have marched in solidarity here, drawing links with black deaths in custody. In Sydney, Aboriginal activists read a message from David Dungay senior, whose son died in custody in December, saying:

"I remember one story about a black man, Eric Garner in New York City being held to the ground by police. He was saying 'I can't breathe' ...

"My son was also crying out 'I can't breathe'. The guards were saying to him, 'you can breathe David,



**Above: Black Lives Matter activists in the US hit the streets**

you're talking.' Yet a few minutes later he was dead ... I want it known what has happened to my son and what is happening to black people in this country. And I want justice."

## Backlash

Right-wing politicians and media outlets in the US have counter-attacked, accusing the Black Lives Matter movement of fostering racial divisions and violence against police.

Following the killing of five Dallas police officers by Afghan war veteran Micah Xavier Johnson, the demands on Black Lives Matter to shut up reached a crescendo. Barack Obama personally travelled to Dallas to attend their funerals—something he has refused to do for the black victims of police killings.

But activists have refused to be bullied. "I won't say Blue Lives Matter" wrote Natasha Lennard, "because it does not need to be said....[those Dallas killings] provoked an immediate response from the president... dozens of unarmed Black men killed by cops go without presidential comment... That's what not mattering looks like".

Some argue it is possible to reform the police by weeding out the bad apples and giving police better training, but this fundamentally misunderstands their role.

As much as the police like to promote themselves as defending ordinary people against crime, their real role is to defend economic inequality. There are over 400 billionaires in the

US alongside more than 45 million people living in poverty.

It would be impossible to maintain this inequality without; first the ideology that says it's fair; but also the laws, the courts, the prisons, and the police that keep people in their place. It is no accident that our prisons are overwhelmingly full of people from poor backgrounds.

It's this daily role of maintaining "order"; responding to business owners who complain about break-ins; patrolling the streets looking for potential law breakers; moving-on the homeless if they congregate and interfere with commerce, which ingrains racist indifference in police.

They soon learn there is a hierarchy and it's the young, the working class, and particularly blacks, who are at the bottom of the pile.

Rather than see petty crime, excessive use of drugs and alcohol, homelessness and interpersonal violence as symptoms of inequality, they absorb the racist ideology promoted by right-wing politicians and newspapers that blame the victims for their own circumstances.

They begin to see the higher rates of homelessness among blacks as the product of them being "naturally" lazy and to see black youth as "predisposed" towards criminality.

The struggle against police racism can't be neatly separated from the struggle against the system that creates such gross economic inequality and the role of the police in defending it.

**The Black Lives Matter movement has put the US police's callous disregard for black lives in the national spotlight**

# People beat back Turkish coup attempt but danger still ahead

By Charlie Kimber

A BATTLE is taking place in Turkey to decide who will gain in the wake of an attempted military coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last month.

Mass popular mobilisation halted the coup. It was a serious threat. The Turkish army has toppled elected governments four times in the past 70 years.

The coup began late on Friday evening as soldiers and tanks came on to the streets of Istanbul and the capital Ankara. Fighter jets swooped over rooftops.

The parliament building was bombed and the state broadcaster forced to read out a message saying the military wanted “to reinstate constitutional order, human rights and freedoms”.

For over an hour it looked likely that the coup would succeed. But then thousands of people came out to oppose it. They lay in front of tanks, and demonstrated outside airports and at the bridge over the Bosphorus strait which had been blocked by troops.

## Firing

One eyewitness described how “The soldiers shouted at people to leave, but they wouldn’t, so they started firing into the air.

“At first the people started to back up, but more and more people were coming into the square, and within minutes they pushed back again.”

In Istanbul waiters and chefs still in uniforms were joined in opposing the military by people abandoning their night out.

It wasn’t only supporters of Erdogan who came onto the streets. Thousands of others who hate Erdogan’s authoritarian regime knew a military coup would mean even more brutal repression.

Erdogan is currently waging a bloody war against the Kurdish people. But Kurdish groups, including the HDP party, denounced the coup.

Almost 300 people died in the battle to repulse the military. The government blames Islamic cleric Fethullah Gulen, who is currently in exile in the US, for the coup.

Suleyman Soylu, Turkey’s minister of labour, even said, “The United States is behind the coup.”

Both the US and German governments waited several hours before condemning the coup. They may have



**Above: Ordinary people in Turkey surround a tank, part of popular pressure that stopped the coup**

waited until they saw it was failing.

But it seems far more likely that those responsible come from the armed forces. Sections of the armed forces feel that Erdogan is too Islamic and has spurned the military in favour of his own power base.

Erdogan is determined to bolster his rule after the coup attempt. He has purged the military and arrested at least 6000 people, including 103 generals and admirals.

He is also seeking to entrench his power by removing other opponents. These include dozens of newspapers, television station and radio stations, publishers and some individuals prominent in the workers’ movement.

Nearly 3000 judges and prosecutors have been dismissed and 600 educational institutions shut down, with the suspension of 15,000 teachers and the cancellation of the licences of 21,000 more in private schools.

Reports suggest that up to a third of generals, air chiefs and admirals were directly involved in the coup attempt. The remainder of the upper ranks did nothing to resist it. Such forces are the enemies of democracy and human rights.

But it’s not just Erdogan taking action. Thousands of people joined a “No to the Coup, Democracy Now” rally in the city of Izmir at the end of July. It was organised by the pro-Kurdish HDP (Peoples Democratic Party) and joined by a grouping of 45 unions and parties that organises May Day.

It followed a demonstration the weekend before of around 100,000 called by the main opposition party, the right wing social democratic CHP (Republican Peoples Party).

The protest also involved some left groups and trade unions. Its main slogan was “Against the coup and against dictatorship”.

Workers have organised against sackings, winning the reinstatement of Mehmet Demir and 21 of his trade unionist colleagues who were removed from state broadcaster TRT.

Mehmet is a trade union activist and ex-president of his union. He had been sacked on the absurd allegation that he was a member of the Gulen sect blamed for the coup. A wave of solidarity protests saved the jobs.

Rectors of Hakkari, Mersin and Tunceli Universities have resumed investigations and even begun dismissing signatories of the Academics for Peace group. It is critical of government policies and military actions against Kurdish citizens in south east Turkey.

But again solidarity can win. Ten of the petition’s signatories at the university in Van province have been reinstated after a campaign.

The coup was defeated by people taking matters into their own hands.

This opens up the possibility of both stifling the military and refusing to accept the shrunken version of democracy that Erdogan offers.

**Socialist Worker UK**

**Erdogan is determined to bolster his rule after the coup attempt**



# Refugees not to blame for attacks in Europe

By James Supple

POLITICIANS AND the media are fanning a backlash against refugees and demanding more security measures after a horrific series of killings in Germany and France.

But more harassment and restrictions on Muslims, migrants and refugees will only compound the bitterness that leads to attacks.

Many have blamed Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to allow refugees from Syria and elsewhere into Germany last year.

Horst Seehofer, the Premier of Bavaria, the state where the attacks took place, declared that the, "policy of open borders cannot be tolerated anymore". But both of the asylum seekers involved in attacks arrived before Merkel declared all Syrian refugees were welcome to remain in August last year.

He called for speeding up deportations of asylum seekers, including sending them back to war zones like Syria.

Armin Schuster, the federal homeland minister from Merkel's party, backed this saying Germany needed a "farewell culture" to deal with asylum seekers.

But just one of the asylum seekers involved in these incidents arrived in Germany over the past year, out of one million people. Every asylum seeker in Germany should not take the blame, or face new punitive restrictions, for the actions of one man.

Bavaria, the German state where three of the four attacks took place, has pledged to recruit thousands more police and increase the surveillance of Muslims in response to the attacks. This will only further marginalise migrant and refugee communities.

In France, this approach has failed to work. Despite a three month state of emergency declared by President Francois Hollande, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel used a truck to kill 84 people in Nice, France on Bastille Day in July.

Nice already has some of the toughest security controls in France. Regional president Christian Estrosi boasted last year after the Charlie Hebdo attacks that if Paris had had the same measures, the attackers, "wouldn't have gone three blocks without being neutralised".

As a result the Muslim community is under siege, from both police ha-



**Above: Resorting to more law and order policies will only mean more harassment of Muslims and refugees**

arrassment and widespread racism. This, along with the escalation of Western bombing and wars in the Middle East, only feeds terrorism.

In response to recent attacks in France, Hollande has only escalated his rhetoric, saying "We have to wage war, by every means".

## 'Radicalisation'

Despite the rhetoric about the threat of "radicalisation" and Islamist ideas, the most serious attack in Germany in recent weeks had nothing to do with Islamic State.

A mass shooting where nine people died in Munich appears to be a racist attack. The attacker, Ali David Sonboly, was obsessed with mass killings and spent a year researching them. He staged his attack five years to the day after Anders Breivik's mass shooting in Norway, and apparently took pride in the fact that he shared the same birthday as Adolf Hitler, according to police. Sonboly apparently boasted to friends that his Iranian heritage meant he was "Aryan", and his victims were all migrants—three from Turkey and three from Kosovo.

Another stabbing in the German city of Reutlingen, where a refugee killed one woman and injured two others, had no link to terrorism, according to police.

In two other incidents the attackers did express support for Islamic State. But these were not attacks directed or organised by a terrorist group, or clear examples of ideological "radicalisation". They were the actions of two individuals broken by their experience of

war and personal tragedy—as well as the already brutal treatment of asylum seekers arriving in Germany.

In the first, an asylum seeker injured five people with an axe and a knife during an attack on a train, two seriously. He apparently became withdrawn and agitated after a friend was killed at home shortly before he staged his attack.

A week later, a Syrian refugee blew himself up outside a music concert in Ansbach, injuring 15 people.

He was rejected as an asylum seeker in Germany, not because he did not deserve protection but because he had registered first in Bulgaria, and had to remain there under EU rules. Both his wife and children were killed in Syria when his house was bombed.

The German government accepted it could not send him back to Syria, but had scheduled him for deportation to Bulgaria. His deportation was suspended after he committed suicide twice and was placed under psychiatric care. Yet the German government notified him of another date for his deportation just before his attack.

In a video, he blamed Germany for assisting the bombing of Syria, saying, "your planes that are shelling us don't distinguish between men, women and even children."

It is the turmoil Western intervention has created in the Middle East that drives people to terrorism, as well as harassment and racism against Muslims and refugees in the West. It is only ending these policies that can address it.

**Hollande has only escalated his rhetoric, saying "We have to wage war, by every means"**

# Strikes against O'Neill over corruption and cuts in PNG

By Tom Orsag

THE POLITICAL crisis in PNG over Prime Minister Peter O'Neill's alleged corruption continues to escalate. Workers staged strikes in July and O'Neill faced down a no confidence motion in parliament.

Riot police shot and wounded dozens of university students on 8 June, during a protest demanding that O'Neill step down and face due process in corruption allegations against him.

In mid-July a group called the Concerned Citizens Coalition representing workers in a number of industries issued a call on O'Neill to resign, before launching a series of strikes.

Airline pilots, maritime and public transport workers, energy workers, bank workers, doctors and health professionals all took part in strike action in Port Moresby, Lae and Mount Hagen. The PNG Trade Union Congress, however, did not back the action.

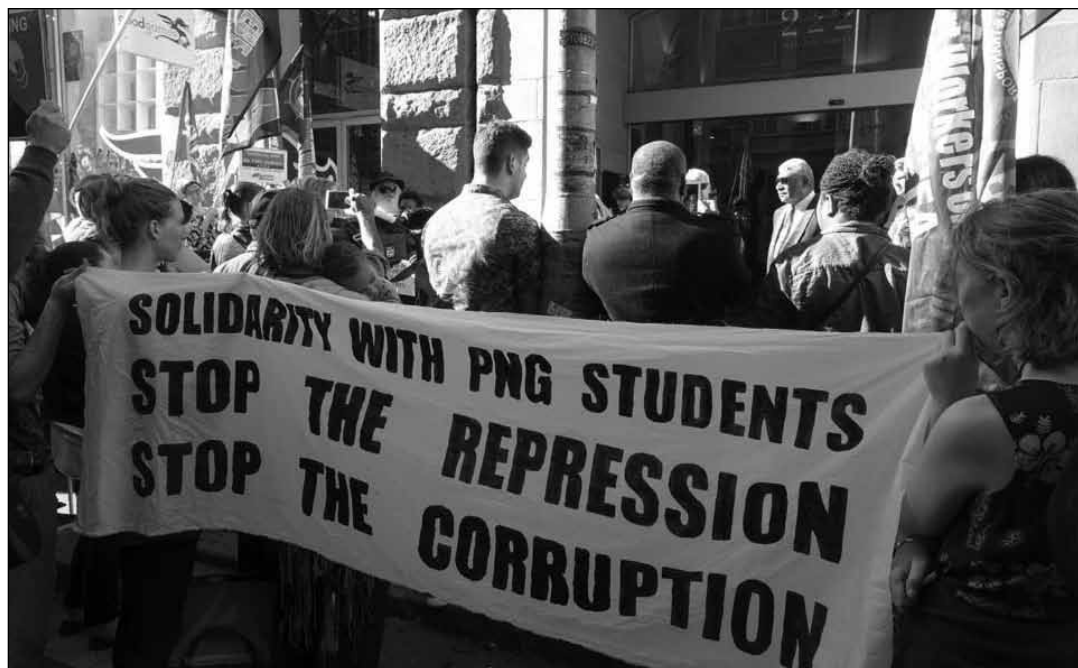
During the strike the PNG Supreme Court ordered Parliament to reconvene to vote on the no confidence motion. Before this, Parliament wasn't set to meet for many months. No confidence motions have been used frequently in the past to remove Prime Ministers, with MPs often shifting their support to a new leader in the middle of parliamentary terms. O'Neill easily defeated the motion by 85 votes to 21, but faces a general election next year.

The initiative from those unions who made the strike call is an important development. But it's difficult to assess their strength.

News reports in PNG said 70 per cent of pilots did not turn up to work by "calling in sick", which had a real impact on flights. James Makop, a leader of the pilots told ABC News, "No man, not even the Prime Minister, who is mandated by us, by the people of Papua New Guinea, on borrowed power, can raise himself above the rest of us and say he's above the law."

Transport across the country was disrupted. As News Limited reported, "Poor roads through the thickly forested highlands that separate its few large cities mean that travellers are effectively stranded without air travel."

Doctors announced that they would be dealing with emergency cases only in the lead up to the no confidence vote, although the Doc-



**Above: Protest in solidarity with the struggle in PNG in Sydney**

tors Association called this individual "civil disobedience" action not strike action. The Association has called both for O'Neill to step down and for huge budget cuts of 40 per cent to the health budget to be reversed.

Dr Sam Yockopua, secretary of the Doctors Association, said, "about 80 per cent of Public Hospitals are literally struggling to keep their doors open due to lack of adequate supplies and consumables".

There have also been delays in paying public servants and teachers their wages.

The level of government concern is shown by the fact that the PNG Defence force were mobilised in response to the strike threat.

O'Neill has brought increased political stability to PNG, remaining Prime Minister since August 2011 to become one of the country's longest serving leaders. But if his efforts to cling onto office start to create ongoing social unrest, PNG's ruling class, indigenous and ex-patriate Australian, will be weighing up whether he should stay on.

The riot police's continued attempt to arrest students, who helped trigger the no confidence motion, is causing continued tension. Most student leaders have been forced to go into hiding or "gone bush".

Eric Tlozek, ABC reporter in PNG said, "Australia gives more than half a billion dollars in aid each year

to PNG, and the Australian Federal Police has 70 officers here providing training and support. Just one week after the students were shot, the AFP officially handed over a million dollars' worth of housing to the police. But not just to any police—to the same division involved in the shooting."

## Economic demands

The student movement so far has simply demanded "out with O'Neill" without elaborating any wider political program. This holds the danger of placing faith in another corrupt figure from within PNG's political elite as the solution. PNG still lacks a working class political party, even a Labor Party, which could begin to raise wider demands.

The action by unions shows the possibility of fusing the demand against political corruption with opposition to O'Neill's savage budget cuts. This is the kind of politics that can end the enormous pain of the cuts and the neo-liberal agenda of all political parties.

The government faces serious economic problems due to the end of the commodities boom and far lower levels of economic growth. The number of jobs has gone backwards by 7 per cent since 2014.

Building solidarity with the movement in PNG can help encourage the emergence of working class and socialist politics in PNG.

**News reports in PNG said 70 per cent of pilots did not turn up to work by "calling in sick"**

# WHAT KIND OF ORGANISATION DO WE NEED?

**Clare Fester** argues that a party that groups together revolutionaries is needed to lead struggles to victory

CAPITALISM IS a system of exploitation, crisis and war. The popularity of British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and the enthusiasm for Bernie Sanders indicates that many are looking for a way to challenge the ravages of the system.

For many, the idea of a “van-guard” socialist party seems outdated, and it’s often associated with completely undemocratic Stalinist politics. But there are a number of reasons that we need revolutionary organisation. What we mean by it is very different to the stereotype.

Because capitalism is based on exploitation and oppression, it breeds resistance. Carlton & United Breweries, in their effort to maximise profits, has just tried to sack their maintenance workforce and rehire them on drastically less pay. So the workers are fighting back. On a much larger scale, 2011 saw the upheavals across the Arab world against dictators and their imperial backers. In 18 days, Egyptians toppled three decades of dictatorship.

Challenges to the system like this—big and small—are produced by the dynamics of the system itself. But while resistance often begins spontaneously, it doesn’t end that way.

The success of resistance depends on organisation, because of uneven ideas inside the working class, and because of the challenges to resistance from the forces of the capitalist state.

## Uneven consciousness

Many people understand there’s a lot wrong with the world. But under ordinary conditions, workers who understand that only mass struggle from below can fundamentally change society are in a small minority.

To most people, the idea that we can win fundamental change seems fantastical. In *The German Ideology*, Marx explains how the ruling class maintains ideological control under capitalism:

“The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The

**A revolutionary organisation seeks to cohere the radical minority that exists in every struggle**

class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.”

Whether it is Pauline Hanson blaming immigrants and Muslims for job losses, or Labor saying we need to restore the budget to surplus so must cut university funding, the ideas of the ruling class are accepted, in whole or in part, by many workers.

The competitive nature of work means that working people can accept the idea that other workers are their competitors or enemies. That turns workers against each other, and weakens our ability to fight the system.

Most workers neither fully accept ruling class ideas, nor fully reject them. Workers can simultaneously hold both radical and reactionary ideas. A worker may understand the boss is their enemy, but still hold sexist or homophobic ideas.

But there is always a radical minority, however small, that rejects ruling class ideas as a whole, including the racism, sexism and homophobia used to divide us, and which is committed to change through mass struggle.

That minority needs to come together in an organisation in order to more effectively fight for its ideas within the wider working class.

## Memory of the class

A revolutionary organisation seeks to cohere the radical minority that exists in every struggle.

It seeks to unite the most politically advanced sections of the working class, to build up a network of class conscious workers across the country and the world and enable them to learn from each other’s struggles. This is really what Lenin meant when he talked about a “vanguard”.

A revolutionary organisation also maintains and shares “the memory of the class”.

In every struggle, small to large, there are arguments about what to do and how to win. For example, anti-union laws often mean unions are unwilling to take the strike action necessary to defeat the boss. But understanding the history of defying anti-worker laws, and the sometimes

reluctance of union officials to lead the struggle necessary, means knowing that defiance is both possible and necessary.

The Marxist tradition brings together the lessons of previous struggles and brings them to bear on today’s struggles.

A revolutionary organisation also needs some degree of centralisation. This allows debate about political perspectives and strategy and then unity in action once a democratic decision has been reached. That allows decisions to be tested in struggle.

The ruling class has co-ordinated, centralised structures of oppression. Behind their ideological arsenal is their coercive power—like armies and police forces.

It is police that are sent to break strikes, and armies that are sent to put down revolutionary upheavals.

They also use the media to attempt to attack and discredit movements and those fighting for change. Countering this requires organisation on our side, to reach into every workplace, university and suburb with arguments countering the lies of the mainstream media, and to mobilise the kind of mass movement that can stand up the state’s repressive arm.

## The party today

Solidarity is not a mass party with any substantial base in the working class.

But we are involved in political struggles in Australia wherever we can be: around union struggles, refugee rights, fights against Islamophobia, for free healthcare, and Aboriginal rights.

It isn’t good enough just to have discussion groups about ideas—we have to test them in the real world.

A socialist perspective in the refugee movement, for example, points towards the importance of connections with organised workers in dismantling the policy.

We began to see some of this kind of action in the “Let them stay” campaign, such as the action by doctors and hospital workers at Lady Cilento hospital. In order to extend this kind of action, we need to grow in size and influence.

Organising among radicalising ordinary people and winning them to socialist ideas means we are in a stronger position to shape the struggles of the future.

# FIGHTING RACISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA HOW CAN WE STOP PAULINE HANSON?

Mass protests and campaigning to debunk and expose her racism is key to driving back Pauline Hanson, and the mainstream Islamophobia that feeds her, argues **James Supple**

PAULINE HANSON'S election to the Senate, and her renewed invitations to spread racist bigotry on prime time TV, have shocked and horrified many people. Her One Nation party will have four seats in the Senate, and a key role in negotiating legislation. So how can we stop her?

Some people argue that demonstrations and expressions of anger against Hanson will play into her hands. Journalist Margo Kingston, who followed Hanson's 1998 election campaign, says the problem is that "neither side understands the other" and therefore the solution is to respectfully listen to Hanson's supporters, in order to bridge the divide.

But this approach means ceding political ground to Hanson and refusing to challenge her.

Waleed Aly has tried to put this into practice. When Sonia Kruger called for a ban on Muslim immigration his response, in a segment on *The Project*, was to accept fears about terrorism as legitimate.

But such fears have been inflated by scaremongering from Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and the right-wing media, in an effort to justify draconian police powers and suspicion of the Muslim community.

So concerned is Waleed Aly to "understand" Hanson's supporters that he is letting them set the terms of the debate. Instead of challenging their ideas, Aly failed to make it clear why casting suspicion on and punishing the Muslim community will only inflame the problem. There would be no risk of terrorism here without the wars the West has unleashed on the Middle East, especially over the last 15 years, and the anti-Muslim racism accompanying them at home.

Pauline Hanson and One Nation's ideas do have to be labelled as racist and fiercely contested. Bigotry should not be an accepted part of political debate.

Openly racist speech results in a rise in physical racist violence. Within weeks of Hanson's maiden speech in 1996, there were a series of racist attacks on Asians. Thomas Teng, who was bashed along with his father Zhong Xin Teng in Canberra, told the *Canberra Times*, "They attacked us because we are Asians. After 30 years, my father has never seen anything of that kind before."

## Mainstream response

The idea that we shouldn't try to isolate Hanson is also coming from the Liberals. So John Howard, of all people, has claimed that:

"I watched this debate back in 1998 and 1999, and the more she was attacked, the more popular she became, because those attacks enhanced her Australian battler image".

But this is precisely the same attitude that Howard took when Hanson was first elected. Howard's approach was to refuse to say she was racist and respond with comments such as, "I think the expression 'racist' is used altogether too freely in this country." Labor leader Kim Beazley refused to use the word either.

Howard's approach was designed to pander to her concerns so he could embrace her racist policies himself.

Howard said he understood why people felt the country was being "swamped by Asians". After all, it was Howard who had first raised the issue of Asian immigration in 1988. He cut immigration, delivered "bucketloads of extinguishment" of Native Title following the Wik judgement and slashed funding to Aboriginal representative body ATSIC (later abolishing it).

It was only the left—trade unions, Aboriginal activists and socialists along with ethnic community councils—that took up the challenge of opposing her. In the months after her maiden speech there were marches

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**Bigotry should not be an accepted part of political debate**

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against racism of 4000 in Brisbane, 10,000 in Sydney and 30,000 in Melbourne.

The protests sought to link Hanson to John Howard and opposed the way that he was encouraging and legitimising her from within the political mainstream.

Some say that if we give Pauline Hanson media airtime, she will simply expose herself or be discredited as a result of journalists' scrutiny.

Exactly the same argument was heard when Hanson first entered politics in 1996. But it was the media that was responsible for making Hanson a celebrity. They embraced the controversy her racism created in the search for higher ratings.

Hanson received dozens of soft interviews on shows like *A Current Affair*, *Sixty Minutes* and Nine's *Midday Show*. Even after she lost her seat she was still treated as a celebrity and invited onto programs like *Dancing with the Stars*.

We can't leave the fight against Hanson to the media or the political mainstream. Demonstrations against Islamophobia and One Nation are vital to driving back racist ideas now too.

## Islamophobia

One of the key reasons for Hanson's comeback, after 20 years of failed attempts, is the legitimacy anti-Muslim ideas have been given by the mainstream Islamophobia from the Liberal government and the media.

Hanson has sought to capitalise on this, shifting her target from Asians and Aboriginal people to Muslims.

Islamophobia has been a constant presence over the last 15 years since the beginning of the "war on terror". Then Prime Minister Tony Abbott began a concerted effort to spread hysteria about Islamic State and the danger of Muslim "radicalisation" in 2014. He began talking in frenzied terms of



the threat from “murderous hordes” of a “death cult”. There were a series of sensationalised terror raids, the first of which saw 870 police mobilised to arrest just 15 people.

After the Martin Place siege, the media went into overdrive, labelling the attack an act of Islamic terrorism despite Monis having a history of bizarre, erratic actions and no existing connection with Islamic State.

And again, Labor has failed to oppose the Liberals’ racism, supporting its new anti-terror laws, the bombing of Iraq and Syria and doing nothing to oppose the scaremongering.

Malcolm Turnbull softened the rhetoric but continued in the same direction, saying efforts to keep out refugees were needed to stop terrorism. And it was Coalition MPs like George Christensen and Cory Bernardi who organised Islamophobic stunts like a Senate inquiry into halal certification.

As a result we have seen more hate attack on Muslims, and even a firebombing outside a Perth mosque at the end of June.

The fight against Hanson’s bigotry must go hand in hand with a campaign to reject this mainstream Islamophobia and make it unacceptable.

Last time around, demonstrations played an important role in stopping One Nation as an organisation. In addition to the larger street marches against racism and high school walk-outs, there were protests at almost every One Nation meeting where Pauline Hanson tried to speak.

This was a response to their effort to begin building a mass membership party based on racism. In 1997, Hanson went on a national speaking tour to try to launch branches across the country. This was a particularly dangerous development which threatened to give further confidence to racists, and the result would have been an escalation in racist hate attacks.

Protests labelling her ideas as racist helped to isolate the existing racist hardcore from the wider layer of people that voted for the party, and made it harder for One Nation to recruit members and establish branches. After thousands protested against her visit to Perth, Pauline Hanson admitted it was “the worst 24 hours of my life”.

This time around, Hanson is less likely to try to repeat the efforts to hold meetings and set up a string of branches around the country.

It proved disastrous at the last attempt. One Nation finally imploded as a result of internal tensions in 1999. So suspicious were they of ordinary One Nation members that Hanson



**Above:**  
**Demonstrations**  
**against Hanson**  
**last time isolated**  
**her and saw her**  
**plummet in the**  
**polls**

and two of her closest advisers set up a completely undemocratic party structure to try to entrench their own direct control. This was a response both to infiltration by other far right and fascist groups, as well as the climate of siege on the party the protests created. Hanson said they wanted to set up a “bullet-proof” organisation designed to “protect it being attacked and broken down”.

But the immediate challenge now is to find ways to pull together broad opposition to Pauline Hanson’s racism and the mainstream Islamophobia that is feeding her.

### Unemployment

But we also need to present an alternative to the unemployment, low pay and cuts to public services that create fertile ground for Hanson.

There is widespread disgust at the political elite due to their failure on jobs and three decades of neo-liberalism and cuts. Here the Margo Kingston has a point, saying that “running class-based ridicule” against Hanson can feed into the idea she is some kind of challenge to the political system.

Hanson tries to appeal to anger about jobs and living standards. She has slammed the mainstream parties, pointing out that, “Country towns that were once thriving with miners or the farming sector, now out of jobs are becoming destitute. Industries and manufacturing continue to close down”. She rails against free trade agreements and tariff cuts for costing

jobs and devastating farmers.

Her vote was high particularly in rural areas of Queensland, in seats like Maranoa and Kennedy where unemployment is 13 per cent, and regional towns like Bundaberg with 16.1 per cent unemployment. In areas suffering from the downturn in mining, Turnbull’s rhetoric about “exciting times” and new economic opportunities only reinforced how out of touch the government is.

Hanson’s racism is designed to turn people’s anger against Muslims, Asians and Aboriginal people. In this too she is following in the footsteps of the major parties. It was the unpopularity of Abbott’s attacks on Medicare, pensioners and the unemployed, in his 2014 budget, that led to him escalating his rhetoric about terrorism and Muslims further and further.

Isolating Hanson requires building a fighting left that can pose a real alternative to the politics of fear and division and fight to improve people’s lives. We need more strikes to fight for jobs, wages and decent working conditions, and a serious defence of Medicare and other services being cut by the government.

We need to channel the real anger and pain being felt by workers and the unemployed against big business and the Coalition, those really responsible for making people’s lives a misery. The solution is not to blame migrants and Muslims but to reverse neo-liberal policies and tax the rich to fund jobs and services.

# CONTINUING ASSIMILATION POLICIES DON DALE KIDS— VICTIMS OF THE NT INTERVENTION

Skyrocketing rates of Aboriginal imprisonment, child removal and social catastrophe have been produced by resurgent assimilationist policies argues **Paddy Gibson**

THE GRAPHIC video footage of Aboriginal children and youth being tortured in the Don Dale juvenile detention centre aired on ABC's Four Corners has sparked international outrage.

The footage showed children as young as 11-years-old being brutally assaulted by guards. We saw the "Behaviour Management Unit" (BMU) in Don Dale, where children were placed in tiny, hot and filthy solitary confinement cells without running water for all but half an hour a day. Particularly shocking were scenes of six children being tear gassed by guards, an act of collective punishment after one of the boys had tried to break free from the BMU.

The stories of abuse in Don Dale are not new. Youth detention in the NT has been the subject of three inquiries in recent years, reports have been delivered to the NT government since 2011 and many of their findings have been reported in the press.

This violent persecution of children is not just the result of rogue guards. It was driven by the Country Liberal Party leadership, senior bureaucrats and the judiciary.

Even while receiving reports of the horrors in Don Dale, NT Chief Minister Adam Giles was pushing through legislation that ensured more children would be locked up and abused. This includes laws this year which introduced a presumption against bail for youth who are "repeat offenders" and legalised the use of "restraint chairs" on children as young as ten years old.

Most of the violence seen on Four Corners was perfectly legal. One guard involved in an incident where Dylan Voller was thrown to the

ground, assaulted and stripped naked was acquitted of assault in 2014.

The NT Supreme Court Judge cited provisions of the NT Youth Justice Act which mean violence used against detainees threatening self-harm is not required to be reasonable.

A call out for protests on 30 July, which mobilised more than 5000 people nationally, said, "this is the tip of the iceberg of the racist 'child protection' and prison systems that subject Aboriginal children to institutionalised child abuse across the continent on a daily basis."

Almost 60 per cent of inmates in juvenile detention centres across Australia are Aboriginal. The majority have not been sentenced for any crime, but are being held on remand.

Bashings by guards are common place. Earlier this year 11-year-old Denzel, taken from his mother by "child protection", ended up being bashed by guards in a detention centre in Queensland. He had two black eyes and his cheek bone was broken.

## New assimilation

More Aboriginal kids are ending up in detention due to worsening poverty and spiraling levels of forced removal from their families by child protection.

Aboriginal child removals have increased more than 500 per cent over the past 15 years. This is the result of the resurgent politics of assimilation championed by John Howard, which has continued with bipartisan support.

Sixty per cent of the children in Don Dale were in "out of home care" when they were picked up by police and put into prison.

Child removal itself is often physically violent and always extremely

.....  
**Aboriginal  
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years**  
—————

traumatising for children.

Last year, footage emerged from an Aboriginal reserve in Moree, NSW showing riot police raiding a house with guns drawn to remove six children. Every day across Australia, police are used to remove children, often taken screaming from the arms of their parents, placed with strangers and denied contact with their family.

A report last year from the NT Children's Commission showed that 10 per cent of children in the "out of home care" system had been victims of substantiated abuse while in care over the years 2014-15.

The poverty inflicted on Aboriginal families and their children must also be seen as a form of abuse, driving unacceptable rates of child mortality and chronic health conditions not seen anywhere else in the developed world.

Most often the official reason Aboriginal children are taken is "neglect". But all levels of government are guilty of systemic neglect, consistently refusing to invest in basic infrastructure and services for Aboriginal people.

A recent report released by the WA Government on the future of remote communities (see page 10) made it clear that Aboriginal towns suffer huge disparities in levels of amenity compared with non-Indigenous towns of a similar size.

But they were also clear that nothing will be done about this, except in a handful of "larger towns". Already meagre services will be withdrawn for many and the expectation is that people should simply leave and assimilate into the "mainstream".

It is this poverty and persecution that drives much of the contact with

state agencies, who step in to punish families and children suffering homelessness, unemployment, drug and alcohol problems, family violence or chronic health issues. These are all symptoms of colonisation.

The political elite then blame Aboriginal culture and “dysfunction” to justify control measures to force “behavioural change” and assimilation into the “mainstream”.

### Victims of the Intervention

The most brutal expression of this racist logic in recent years has been the Northern Territory Intervention.

It is impossible to understand the horror seen in Don Dale without the context of the Intervention. The same politicians who in 2007 suspended the Racial Discrimination Act and sent the Australian Army into remote communities in the name of saving children from sexual abuse have blood on their hands from Don Dale. The “pedophile rings” that then Minister Mal Brough said were in every Aboriginal community were found to be non-existent after years of intense police investigation. Don Dale has shown that it is the Government that is responsible for organised child abuse.

The Intervention was launched as the culmination of John Howard’s politics of assimilation in Aboriginal affairs.

Throughout his time in government, Howard assiduously blamed Aboriginal culture—and the “failings” of Indigenous people and their communities—for the shocking conditions in which they found themselves. He promoted the conservative historians who, in the so-called history wars, argued that pre-colonial Aboriginal culture was violent and degenerate, and denied the brutality of the colonisation of Australia and the existence of the Stolen Generations.

This provided justification for attacks on native title, land rights and community controlled organisations. Under Howard, Aboriginal services were massively defunded, including hundreds of Aboriginal women’s centres. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission was also dismantled in 2005.

With the Intervention, Howard reimposed forms of control over Aboriginal life enforced by Welfare Boards and mission managers throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Aboriginal people are denied rights enjoyed by other Australian citizens simply by virtue of living on Aboriginal Lands, classified as “Prescribed Areas” under special legislation.



**Above: Rallying as part of the 30 July snap actions around the country in Melbourne**

Photo: Kelly Scott

Police have the power to raid homes and search cars without a warrant. Half of Centrelink pay is quarantined on a “BasicsCard” which can only be used to buy approved items at government approved stores. Aboriginal people must work 25 hours a week to receive this “pay” on the BasicsCard. This leads to open segregation in shops, with different treatment and sometimes separate queues set up for BasicsCard holders. Police keep a constant guard outside supermarkets in Alice Springs to stop black people from entering the bottle shops.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on these new forms of control, including on BasicsCard infrastructure, government managers who have taken over communities, “child protection” workers to forcibly remove children and a big increase in police numbers. New Centrelink regulations see parents cut off if children miss school.

Meanwhile, the destruction of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and the dismantling of local Aboriginal councils has seen thousands of Aboriginal people made unemployed, basic services in remote communities pushed to breaking point and large-scale migration to urban areas where many people end up homeless.

Both NT Government and Commonwealth Government budget cuts have also gutted youth programs, legal aid and many other front line services trying to hold band-aids onto the

wounds from systemic injustice.

The impact on Aboriginal children has been horrific. School attendance rates are down, child malnutrition rates are unchanged, recorded rates of attempted suicide and self-harm have increased more than 400 per cent. The number of Aboriginal children in “out of home care” has increased from approximately 250 in 2007 to more than 1000 today. The number of children locked in detention has doubled. Many more children are robbed of contact with their parents as adult prison numbers have exploded from approximately 650 Aboriginal people in 2007 to more than 1400 today, including a tripling of the number of women in prison.

The Intervention has given encouragement to the NT government to go on their own binge of “law and order” and anti-Aboriginal policies. This started with the NT Labor government in 2008 which seized all the assets of Aboriginal community councils, including vital civil works equipment and handed them to new Super Shires. NT housing also took over all the housing stock and bi-lingual education programs were dismantled.

The CLP government intensified this push from 2012, introducing “paperless arrest” laws which allow Aboriginal people to be picked up and placed in cells with no charge. They introduced new categories of mandatory sentencing along with the specific measures directed at youth offenders described above.

## FEATURES

Johnny Lawrence, a barrister featured on Four Corners, said that the image of a hooded Aboriginal youth strapped to a chair in Don Dale made him think of two words, “no future”. The children brutalised in Don Dale have grown up for almost a decade under this regime. They have seen the persecution and the hopelessness enforced by all levels of government. The guards that bashed them have also lived through this period, where racism is law and politicians and the media have constantly demonised Aboriginal youth. These guards may have pulled the trigger—but the Intervention loaded the gun.

### Bring the children home

The outrage over Four Corners has exposed the hypocrisy and complicity of both NT and Federal political leaders, opening up an important opportunity to push for fundamental change. Malcolm Turnbull immediately called for a Royal Commission into abuse in NT juvenile detention centres, hoping to quell the outrage. This has been extended to include an inquiry into the child protection system which everyone acknowledges is feeding the prisons.

But Turnbull’s appointment of former NT Chief Justice Brian Martin immediately blew up in his face. Martin had sentenced many Aboriginal children to prison himself. In 2010 he gave lenient sentences to five white racists who killed Kwentymaye Ryder in Alice Springs and made outrageous comments about their “good character”.

The protests on 30 July helped to force Martin’s resignation. Former Human Rights Commissioner Mick Gooda has now been appointed, along with Former Queensland Supreme Court judge Margaret White. White is no stranger to Aboriginal politics, having represented the Queensland government for a decade when they were trying to stop the Mabo Native Title case.

Bill Shorten has changed his tone considerably from the paternalistic rhetoric of former Labor Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin, or Prime Ministers Rudd and Gillard. He called for Aboriginal commissioners to lead the Royal Commission, arguing it must be “done with Aboriginal people, not to Aboriginal people”.

He highlighted the huge increase in Aboriginal children in “out of home care” as an issue that was “getting worse not better”. But he also undermined calls from new Aboriginal Labor Senator Patrick Dodson for the

inquiry to be national in scope, coming out in support of a Gooda led NT Inquiry.

NT Labor too have changed their rhetoric, promising to repeal many of the draconian laws introduced under the CLP and to revisit the question of local Aboriginal councils. Their eyes are firmly on an NT election scheduled for late August, which they are predicted to comfortably win.

But Labor have yet to offer any account for the central role they played in implementing the NT Intervention.

They are just as implicated in the Don Dale atrocities as the Liberals. Much of the abuse happened when Labor were in Government in the NT and Federally.

Jenny Macklin was Commonwealth Indigenous Affairs Minister in 2012 when the first report from the NT Children’s Commission detailing the brutalisation of Dylan Voller was given to government.

Rather than act to end the abuse, in 2012 she moved ahead with implementing the “Stronger Futures” legislation that will see the Intervention continue for a further ten years. Forcing Labor to abandon support for “Stronger Futures” remains a crucial task for the Aboriginal rights movement.

The Royal Commission itself will certainly expose more horrors. But it will do nothing to deliver meaningful change.

Both the NT Intervention and NT government policies systematically breach the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody which ran from 1987 to 1991. It argued that Aboriginal self-determination and serious investment in community controlled development was needed to end the mass incarceration of black children and adults alike.

The Bringing Them Home report in 1997 was also the product of wide consultations with Aboriginal communities on issues of both child protection and juvenile justice. It found that both of these systems were creating similar dynamics to the Stolen Generations of the 20th Century. The report said:

“Our principal finding is that self-determination for Indigenous peoples provides the key to reversing the over-representation of Indigenous children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems of the States and Territories and to eliminating unjustified removals of Indigenous children from their families and com-

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**The Royal Commission will certainly expose more horrors. But in itself it will do nothing to deliver meaningful change**

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munities... not a single submission to the Inquiry from Indigenous organisations saw intervention from welfare departments as an effective way of dealing with Indigenous child protection needs”.

Grandmothers Against Removals, who have been fighting to bring Aboriginal children back to their families since 2014, issued a statement in the wake of Four Corners calling for national unity around this program:

“Bringing them Home was clear about the solution to the problem of contemporary removal of Indigenous children—Aboriginal control of Aboriginal child welfare and youth justice. Close down the child prisons. End the control mainstream welfare agencies have over Aboriginal families. Invest serious resources into community controlled support services, infrastructure and positive opportunities to deal with family crises.”

The hard reality is that no government left to their own devices will implement such a policy, no matter how badly it is needed to alleviate the suffering of children. Capitalism in Australia is intensely hostile to Aboriginal self-determination. It wants Aboriginal communities broken and disorganised, fearing the threat of a confident black movement that can expose the true history of this country and fight for land and justice. Any change will only come through struggle.

Adam Giles says that the NT government will build a new child prison to replace Don Dale. We need to ensure that this prison is never built and the money is invested in communities.

We need to rebuild the mass support for Aboriginal self-determination seen in the 1970s and 80s that won the limited land rights that exist today and established community controlled organisations—all gains that have been beaten back by the Intervention and associated policies.

Consistent mobilisation through the Royal Commission process can unite Aboriginal organisations and social justice groups and should aim to mobilise serious union power. Already in the NT, the Maritime Union of Australia has played a leading role in the response to Don Dale.

The youth brutalised in Don Dale have shown incredible strength, fighting for freedom while on the inside and speaking up against injustice once released. Many more, including Dylan Voller, are still locked up, at serious risk and struggling for freedom. They need our urgent support.



# A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE— LESSONS FROM WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN THE US

***She's Beautiful When She's Angry*  
Directed by Mary Dore  
Now on Netflix**

"THERE'S SOMETHING wrong with the world if a woman can make more money as a Play Boy bunny or a cover girl than as anything else!" So argues a women's liberationist at the one of the US women's movements biggest ever protests, in Washington, 1970.

These days, some women run countries or companies—but for the vast majority, this statement is still true. That illustrates how much sexism, if more disguised and insidious, is still with us.

*She's Beautiful When She's Angry*, originally released in 2014, has played to dozens of sold out screenings in Australia, and is now streaming on Netflix.

Aiming to provide a comprehensive history of the women's movement of the late 1960s and 70s in the US, it features fascinating original footage from protests and meetings of the movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Women activists, including famous figures such as Rita Mae Brown, Susan Brownmiller and Jo Freeman, reflect on their experiences in the movement while we watch their younger selves in action.

Despite the thoughtless title, *She's Beautiful* also seems designed to address the issues concerning today's intersectional feminists, taking on questions of race, sexuality



**Above: An archival photo featured in the film of lesbian activists**

and class and organisation. Ultimately, though, the attempt to explain the movement's debates is rather superficial. Determined to wrap everything up in a neat bow, it ends up being very forgiving of the issues that contributed to the movement's decline in the 1980s.

## **Lighting the fire**

Changing conditions in Western capitalism set the scene for the movement. The post-war boom drew more and more women into the workforce. Yet the prevailing view remained that a woman's place was in the home. Women were unable to obtain credit or bank loans without a husband's approval.

The need for a more

skilled workforce meant higher education was expanding, and increasing numbers of women were graduating from university. But women were still denied jobs they were qualified for, or drastically underpaid for them.

One activist in the documentary recalls a job advertisement for a university-educated woman secretary—one of the attractive possibilities included in the advertisement was that you had the chance to end up the boss's wife!

And at the same time, the pill dramatically transformed sex and relationships, giving women and their partners the opportunity to control when—and if—they had

children. As Judith Orr observes in her new book, *Marxism and Women's Liberation*, "Up until then, contraceptives ... were often too expensive for most working class pockets. The alternatives were early withdrawal or sponges soaked in brandy or vinegar."

Combine this with thousands of women organising in the Civil Rights Movement from the mid-1950s, and you can see how the situation was explosive. Many of the women interviewed attest how the Civil Rights movement gave them their "training" in left politics, and how activists like Diane Nash, who led the 1961 Freedom Rides, showed them the pos-

sibility of women leading political struggles.

## Conscious beginnings

Women faced sexism from within the radical movements, particularly in the US. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which was leading the student wing of the movement against the war in Vietnam, rejected an anti-sexist motion from women members in 1967. Popular slogans demonstrate what was considered acceptable—one encouraging men to resist the draft was “Girls say yes to boys who say no”.

Women formed their own organisations and began “consciousness raising” groups to discuss issues they faced, calling themselves “Women’s Liberation” after the National Liberation Front fighting the US in Vietnam.

Here began the famous slogan “the personal is political”. On the one hand, this meant women generalising out of personal experience of sexism to try to understand it as a problem of society. On the other, it also led to seeing personal transformation or “living the revolution” as the key to change.

The Miss America protest in 1968—where a Women’s Liberation banner was unfurled on national TV and a sheep was crowned the winner by the protestors—was the movement’s first major protest and it provoked nationwide discussion.

In archival footage, one TV interviewer, shocked by the notion, asks a group of women activists, “So this group doesn’t think a woman’s place is in the home?” Kate Millett (who coined the term “sexism”), responds, “We believe in the political, social and economic equality of the sexes ... we’re an oppressed group.”

The movement flour-

ished and groups formed all around the country (and around the world).

## An issue of class

In the early years, there was more focus on demands that concerned working class women—in particular equal pay, free abortion and child care. The 1970 demonstration in Washington was organised as a “strike” around the slogan, “don’t iron while the strike is hot” and had three main demands:

- Equal opportunity in health and education
- Free abortion on demand
- 24-hour child care

Talk of revolution was everywhere, with radical movements shaking up society from East to West. One woman explains, “We believed we needed social revolution for women to be truly liberated ... We didn’t want a piece of the pie. We wanted to change the pie.”

But many women saw what needed to be overthrown not as capitalism, but “male supremacy”. Anti-Communism in the US, along with the conservative gender norms of Stalinism that influenced the Communist organisations meant that socialist influence in the movement was weak.

Instead, various forms of patriarchy theory dominated. As Orr explains, the idea of patriarchy can be summed up as, “a system of control and domination that pre-dated and acted alongside and separate to class society, by which all men oppress all women.”

Men were the “political enemy”, akin to slave owners, “the foremen in the big plantation of maleville”, according to one famous movement document, the Florida Paper of 1968 written by Beverly Jones and Judith Brown.

Others said women were a colonised fourth world and class was essentially a distinction between men.

Though this is not explained as such, the film does mention one manifestation of this approach—the idea that women needed to stop having sex with men to be truly liberated. In one clip, Jill Johnston claims, “all women are lesbians, except those who don’t know it.”

However, the movement also faced homophobic ideas on its right, particularly associated with Betty Friedan and the lobby group, National Organisation of Women (NOW). Friedan argued lesbian issues were a diversion; a “lavender menace”. In fact the movement was often blind to issues outside the experience of the white, university-educated women who formed its core—another issue was the different priorities of black women and white women.

**The movement was often blind to issues outside the experience of the white, university-educated women who formed its core**

Abortion was a key concern for Women’s Liberation groups, and backyard abortion was still killing women across the country. In one attempt to address this, an underground abortion service in Chicago performed 11,000 illegal abortions from 1967 to 1973.

But many black and Latino women felt their needs were different. Black women faced involuntary sterilisation, documented by civil rights activists in the book *Genocide in Mississippi*, as had Puerto Rican women. Understandably, many saw their right to have children as more important than abortion. And in a situation where black men were beaten and harassed by police, many black women rejected the movement’s idea of all men as the problem.

The resolution was often for black women to form their own organisations (though, as the film notes, this was rejected by the radical women of the Puerto Rican equivalent of the Black Panthers, the Young Lords).

Fragmentation around identities was accompanied by an increasingly inward-looking focus on lifestyle. One group, Cell 16—featured in *She’s Beautiful*—had a program of “celibacy, separatism and karate”.

*She’s Beautiful* presents the debates as almost an entirely positive experience, often accepting the division of the movement into multiple organisations based on separate identities as the solution, and downplaying the acrimony the debates produced.

The alternative to this process of fragmentation was uniting women and men against the capitalist system that is the source of sexism and oppression, on the basis of class.

It is much clearer today—with Hillary Clin-

ton angling for the White House—the way that class cuts across women’s experience of oppression and their interest in fighting it. As one black feminist activist, Eleanor Holmes-Norton, explains in *She’s Beautiful*, “Women who have spent their lives working in other women’s kitchens have a different kind of handicap than women who have been oppressed for their sex in other ways.”

In the 1970s women’s movement in Australia and Britain, some activists had more of a socialist perspective and saw men as their comrades in the struggle against sexism. Such an orientation meant, for example, mass demonstrations for abortion rights that involved tens of thousands of men marching alongside women.

As Orr and others have demonstrated elsewhere, while some working class men accept sexist ideas, they don’t have a stake in them. Sexist ideas both divide the working class and provide the ideological justification for unpaid labour in the home—something that benefits the capitalist class, not working class men. Winning women and men away from sexist ideas is part of the struggle of the whole class.

The women’s movement and the struggles of the 1960s and 70s achieved much in transforming sexist attitudes and in basic equality for women under the law. *She’s Beautiful* is book-ended by the contemporary challenges of sexism in the US—constant attacks on abortion rights and SlutWalk protests. We can celebrate the achievements of the women’s movement, but if we’re to deal the final blow to a sexist system, we need to learn also from its mistakes.

**Amy Thomas**

# Only traces displayed of Rivera and Kahlo's revolutionary art

**Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera**  
**Art Gallery NSW until**  
**9 October**  
**Tickets \$16-\$18**

ANYONE WHO has heard of Diego Rivera's stunning and controversial murals, or of Frida Kahlo's intense explorations of oppression and sexuality will want to see the Art Gallery of NSW exhibition featuring the two Mexican artists. But manage your expectations, and supplement your visit with some wider reading and viewing to get a fuller sense of these artists' revolutionary worlds and work.

The artworks on display are drawn from the collection that belonged to Mexican movie moguls Jacques and Natasha Gelman. Massive portraits of Natasha Gelman are the first and some of the largest paintings you see, and the artists' most powerful works exploring the social and psychological tensions of the first half of the 20th century are conspicuously absent.

The curators pad out Kahlo's self-portraits and Rivera's lily-laden paintings with a narrative of all-consuming and tragic love affairs, spiked with the flavour of the Mexican revolution.

Aside from exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky's cameo appearance on the timeline and in a video at the end, it is difficult to get a sense of the global ruptures that Rivera was responding to and helping to fuel. Some of this is unavoidable—Rivera's most political works were murals, deliberately public art contrasting workers, peasants, indigenous Mexicans and Detroit factory workers in historical and contemporary struggle against idle



and depraved rulers.

In 1938, Trotsky wrote, "Do you wish to see with your own eyes the hidden springs of the social revolution? Look at the frescoes of Rivera. Do you wish to know what revolutionary art is like? Look at the frescoes of Rivera." But you will have to look online, as there is barely a shadow of this revolutionary impulse in this exhibition. Some worth investigating are: *Wall Street Banquet* (1928), *Frozen Assets* (1938) and most famously *Man at a Crossroads* (1934)—the mural commissioned and then destroyed by the Rockefeller family because Rivera refused to remove Lenin's face!

Kahlo's paintings are more internal and conjure the anguish of oppression, and a protest against it. Her debilitating injuries were obviously a source

**Above: Rivera's *Calla Lily Vendor*, which forms part of the exhibition**

of endless physical pain and social isolation, but some of the artworks depicting physical injury communicate other kinds of torment.

*The Little Deer* (1946), *A Few Small Nips* (1935) and *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932) are just some of her paintings that acutely convey the brutality of sexism and the sense of dissociation and alienation from your own body that women's oppression routinely

generates. The exhibition includes some of Kahlo's sketches that get at this theme, but not the final artworks.

## Mexican revolution

Clearly the Mexican revolution was a touchstone for Kahlo. Her art is infused with the style and symbols of Mexican folk art and we are told that she saw her own life as so tied to it that she gave her birthdate as 1910, its first year. To understand what Kahlo was moved by, it's worth reading Stuart Easterling's three part series on the Mexican Revolution in *International Socialist Review*.<sup>1</sup>

The strident and endless defiance of the peons (bonded agricultural labourers), the rapid social transformation and the bitter human sacrifice involved gives some context to Kahlo's deep affection for the people who

had fought long and hard against injustice.

Easterling's series argues that the revolution was not complete; while the monumental struggle ensured that the ruling class was weakened and that land and social reforms were widespread, the working class and campesinos were incorporated into a state that remained a capitalist one. But it seems Rivera and Kahlo did not agree.

The exhibition makes much of Kahlo's affair with Trotsky, but it doesn't explain that she was an on and off member of the Stalinist Communist Party. Their Mexican nationalism was also at odds with Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. What is clear, though, is the sentimental nationalism in Rivera and Kahlo's work; for Rivera, struggles of Mexicans are depicted as historical, or against the capitalists in the United States. For Kahlo, the tension in her work is an internalised struggle with a woman's body; not explicitly externalised against the local Mexican ruling class.

There is a new wave of struggle in Mexico, with the Oaxaca teachers leading the fight against austerity and neo-liberalism. Notwithstanding their nationalism, the violence and pain of oppression and the transformative power of revolution that Rivera and Kahlo lived and painted are important wells of creative inspiration for Mexican revolutionaries, and anyone who wants justice. Make sure you go beyond this exhibition to get closer to the full effect.

**Lucy Honan**

1. See <http://isreview.org/issue/74/mexico-revolution-1910-1920>



# LET SCA STAY DEFEATS MERGER BUT FIGHT NOT OVER

By Dylan Griffiths and  
Adam Adelpour

THE CAMPAIGN to save Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) has dealt a serious blow to the University of Sydney's plan to shut the art school, but the fight is not over.

The University of Sydney has ditched its plan to close SCA and "merge" it into the University of NSW. The Heads of Agreement with UNSW didn't even survive two months.

But Sydney Uni still plans to close the Rozelle campus down at the end of the year and move remaining SCA students to its main campus. The campaign will now have to press the advantage and escalate to keep SCA at Callan Park.

"This is more motivation to keep fighting. The dissolution of the Heads of Agreement will not placate us and we will continue to fight to keep SCA at Callan Park," SCA student Jemima Wilson said.

The campaign so far has shown that protest works.

Six weeks of campaigning saw students, alumni, the arts community and other supporters demonstrate at the University Senate and at the opening of the Archibald Prize.

Thousands signed petitions and prominent artists such as Ben Quilty voiced strong public opposition to the plan.

It was this pressure that killed off the agreement with UNSW.

What remains of the University of Sydney's plan will still be a major blow to students, staff and the arts in general if it goes ahead.

In place of the UNSW merger Vice Chancellor Michael Spence said that SCA will be merged into the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in an announcement at the end of July.

He also said that SCA will be moved to main campus at the start of 2017.



**Above: SCA students organised a vigil outside the Archibald Prize opening**

A move to the main campus places jobs, the college's facilities, and the curriculum at risk.

There have been no guarantees to preserve what students and staff have at Callan Park.

The university has also discontinued the Bachelor of Visual Arts (BVA) from 2017. According to Spence a "re-imagined" BVA would then be re-introduced in 2018. Discontinuing the degree means SCA will lose student enrolments.

A smaller number of students will be used to justify downsizing staff and the curriculum.

Michael Spence has said the move, "will avoid the unnecessary costs of remaining at Rozelle for more than a transition period". This underlines the fact that the plan to move SCA to the main campus is part of a purely profit driven agenda that

involves no regard for the arts, staff or students whatsoever.

The Let SCA Stay campaign must build on its partial victory and continue to fight until its demands are met.

Students will hold a General Assembly on 10 August to vote on holding a student strike during the major demonstration of staff and students on 17 August.

Escalation will be essential to killing off the rest of management's plan.

Students need to go all out to strike and boycott classes to ensure the protest on 17 August is absolutely massive.

Show your support by joining the 17 August rally at 1pm at the Madison Building at the University of Sydney, Camperdown campus.

**The campaign so far has shown that protest works**