

Solidarity

Issue No. 149 / June-July 2021

\$3/\$5



NO COLD WAR ON CHINA STOP MORRISON'S WARMONGERING

CLIMATE

Campaign against Kurri
Kurri and gas grows

PALESTINE

Zionism and how Israel
serves imperialism

SEXISM

Will longer sentences
protect women?

Solidarity **WHAT WE STAND FOR**

Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

Capitalism is a system of competition, crisis, and war based on exploitation of workers, producing for profit not human needs. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over production or distribution. Through environmental degradation and climate change capitalism has become a threat to humanity's future and life on earth.

Workers power and socialism

The working class has the power to challenge the existing system and create a better world. We stand for socialism, a society based on democratically elected workers councils which would control and plan the economy to produce for human need. The authoritarian states like Russia and China are not socialist but forms of state capitalism where workers have no power.

What about elections and parliament?

Parliament, the army, the police and the courts are institutions of the capitalist state that maintain the dominance of the ruling class over the rest of society. The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used by the working class, it must be smashed. Workers need to create their own state based on workers councils.

While parliament can be a platform for socialists, real change doesn't come through parliament. It is won by mass action in strikes, protests and demonstrations.

We are internationalists

The struggle for socialism has no national boundaries. We oppose everything that turns workers from one country against those from another; we campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose borders and immigration controls, and welcome migrants and refugees.

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

Australia is an imperialist power established through genocide on stolen Indigenous land. We support the continuing struggles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for land, justice and self-determination.

Oppression and liberation

We oppose sexism, racism, homophobia and transphobia. We fight against all forms of discrimination and the oppression of women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrants, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. We oppose discrimination against Muslims and people from the Middle East.

Linking up the struggles

We are active building movements for environmental and social change and economic equality. We are active in our unions and work to build the organisation and self-confidence of the rank and file. We work to bring activists together to strengthen each movement and build a common struggle against capitalism.

Educate, agitate, organise

Socialism cannot be introduced from above, by parliament or parties. The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself.

Solidarity is an organisation of activists, anti-capitalists and revolutionary socialists committed to socialism from below. We are part of the International Socialist Tendency.

A democratic revolutionary party is necessary to deepen resistance to capitalism and to build a movement to overthrow the system. Solidarity members are beginning to build such a party out of today's struggles against the system.

SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

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Online meetings via Zoom
6.30pm every Thursday
See fb.com/soliaus/events for details or contact solidarity@solidarity.net.au

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Things they say

We are exploring alternatives, but I believe, personally, it is the right stance because of the consequences of blinking.

Michaelia Cash favours keeping the Tamil family in detention

The cost of border protection is high, but it is money well-spent.

Immigration Minister Alex Hawke on the \$6.7 million cost to detail Priya, Nades and their two kids on Christmas Island

What is the point of being an MP, unless you are willing to use your voice for justice, compassion and the fair go?

Labor MP Kristina Keneally raises a compelling point over refugees

It pays for a lot of barista machines that produces the coffee that inner-city people sit and talk about the death of coal

Acting Prime Minister Michael McCormack

The idea that somehow we should be promoting armed conflict with a superpower is madness and I don't get it.

WA Premier Mark McGowan

Ambition alone won't solve the problem of actually reducing emissions. First, countries need to demonstrate performance.

Scott Morrison lectures the world against being too ambitious on climate change. No danger of that in his case

The oil and gas sector is a major contributor to Australia's prosperity—always has, will always be
Morrison still hasn't got the memo about climate change, as he addresses the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association

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Tax dodging of billionaires exposed

BILLIONAIRES INCLUDING Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk and Warren Buffett have managed to pay no tax, a leak of tax information to US news website ProPublica shows.

Bezos, the world's wealthiest person, with enough money to blast himself into space, paid no tax in 2007, a year when his shares doubled in price. He paid nothing again in 2011. Bezos' current total wealth is \$230 billion.

Tesla's Elon Musk, the world's second wealthiest person, managed to pay zero tax in 2018.

ProPublica calculated that the richest 25 Americans paid just 3.4 per cent tax on their growth in income between 2014 and 2018. Combined these 25 multi-billionaires "earn" \$1.1 trillion in 2018, the same as 14.3 million American workers combined.

ProPublica's Jesse Eisinger said: "We were pretty astonished that you could get [tax] down to zero if you were a multi-billionaire. Actually paying zero in tax really floored us. Ultra-wealthy people can sidestep the system in an entirely legal way."

It's little different here. There were 66 millionaires who managed to pay zero tax in Australia in 2018-19, the Australia Institute found. Another 156 people with an income between \$500,000 and \$1 million did the same.

Dystopian 'ZenBooths' installed at Amazon

AMAZON IS introducing "Zen-Booths" for its stressed and over-worked employees to practice "mindfulness" and "help them recharge and reenergize", it says.

The phonebooth sized boxes in its warehouses will host a computer where workers can access, "a library of mental health and mindful practices to recharge the internal battery".

With its workers every second monitored by surveillance devices to ensure they keep working at frenetic pace, and resorting to pissing in a bottle because they don't have enough time to take a bathroom break, there are clearly some more straightforward ways to improve their mental health.

Submarine spending to face off China up another \$10 billion



THE FEDERAL government will spend up to \$10 billion more rebuilding existing Collins class submarines due to delays replacing them, Defence Minister Peter Dutton has announced.

This is just the latest in efforts to face off with China. As *The Australian* helpfully explained, the billions in spending is designed to keep them, "not only in the water but also regionally superior into the late 2030s and early 2040s".

The ever growing cost of its 12 new French-designed submarines has already ballooned to an appalling \$90 billion by the time they are all finished over two decades. This means a total of \$100 billion will be spent on submarines by then.

But it'll cost a further \$145 billion in maintenance to keep the new subs going over their lifespan, Defence told Senate Estimates in November 2019.

All this is being spent to double the size of Australia's submarine fleet.

The costs could go up even further, with the Australian government refusing to sign contracts to allow work on its new submarine fleet to go forward. This is due to a dispute with the French company about how much of the work will be done in Australia.

\$1.8 billion settlement for Robodebt victims

A COURT has approved a \$1.8 billion settlement for victims of the government's Robodebt scheme targeting welfare recipients. Justice Bernard Murphy slammed the scheme as a "shameful chapter" in government administration that had ultimately resulted in a "huge waste of public money".

At least 381,000 people will be repaid \$751 million and the government has agreed to wipe all debts, totalling \$1.76 billion, raised under the scheme.

Justice Murphy said he had heard "heart-wrenching" examples of the impact of Robodebts on victims during the case, including "financial hardship, anxiety and distress, including suicidal ideation and in some cases suicide". While he declined to agree that the government had displayed negligence in issuing Robodebts, it had "completely failed" to ensure the scheme had a proper legal basis, he said.

Send suggestions for INSIDE THE SYSTEM to solidarity@solidarity.net.au

Working women's legal centres to shut

WORKING WOMEN'S centres, which provide legal advice over issues from workplace sexual harassment to underpayment, are facing closure following a refusal to fund them in May's federal budget.

This comes despite a recommendation in the Respect@Work report to expand the services.

"Many women don't know where to turn when they experience sexual harassment at work. They face difficult decisions and often face choosing between their safety and their livelihoods.

"We provide free information to women and already there is a huge unmet need", Fiona Hunt, director of the Queensland working women's centre told the *Financial Review*.

In NSW the Women's Legal Service has tried to assist but can only offer a volunteer lawyer two days a week.

The Service's Helen Matthews says, "we turn away more women than we can help."

Working women's centres began operating in 1979 to assist women who weren't in a union or able to afford a lawyer to deal with a workplace issue.

In the early 1990s every state and territory had them, but they now exist only in the NT, SA and Queensland. Other centres have long shut.

SA's is the only one left with enough funding to survive.

The centres estimate it would cost just \$20 million to set up and run them in every state and territory.

But they received just \$200,000 altogether in May's federal budget. So much for the "budget for women".

EDITORIAL

On climate and China, Morrison incites global chaos—kick him out

SCOTT MORRISON'S blame for the latest COVID lockdown in Melbourne is clear. His casual attitude to vaccination and building fit-for-purpose quarantine centres mean Australia is still vulnerable to future outbreaks.

The Coalition have quietly dropped any targets for vaccination and are doing little to encourage anyone to get their shot. Health Minister Greg Hunt signalled that there was no rush to get vaccinated, telling us that, "later on in the year, there will be enough mRNA vaccines for every Australian".

The government took four months to begin vaccinating aged care residents, despite saying initially it would be done in six weeks. It still doesn't even know how many aged care staff have been vaccinated.

These potentially deadly delays have a motive. Morrison wants to keep people in fear of the virus for as long as possible, hoping it will boost his chances at the election.

The Liberals are also dialling up their rhetoric against China. Morrison is doing all he can to push the US and other nations to heighten tensions, jetting off to the G7 meeting to push the case.

This fuels the chance of war. It has also seen the Liberals pour \$270 billion into military spending to acquire long-range missiles, new submarines, and fighter jets—money that could be going towards the health system or tackling COVID.

On the eve of the G7 meeting, Morrison declared that "escalating great power strategic competition" was "the defining issue" on which "our prosperity and our way of life depends". He all but boasted there was a new Cold War with China, warning of "competing models for economies and societies" and saying the start of the last Cold War between the US and Russia was a model for today.

Defence Minister Peter Dutton also chimed in, declaring there should be more US troops rotating through Darwin and a US naval presence near Perth. He also repeated his claim that the prospect of war was now "less remote" and that Australia "must be prepared".

US President Joe Biden also wants to step up the confrontation. His national security adviser told the media that other G7 leaders had backed his calls to



Above: Scott Morrison in the UK for the G7 meeting

"counter and compete" with China.

Speaking after the summit, Morrison celebrated what he said was, "very strong support for the stand that Australia has taken".

The G7 final communique pledged to challenge China's "non-market policies and practices" and also criticised its actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and the South China Sea.

Labor complains that this belligerent talk is just Coalition posturing over national security. But Morrison's push is about cementing Australia's own power to dominate the region, by drawing the US into greater involvement in the Asia-Pacific. This is an aim that Labor shares.

But it will mean further wars alongside the US, and more Australian war crimes like those in Afghanistan.

And it brings the prospect of a disastrous war between superpowers armed with nuclear weapons.

Fuelling climate chaos

Morrison escaped serious scrutiny at the G7 over his pathetic climate policies. There were few new commitments resulting from the meeting from anyone.

But Morrison is still badly at odds with the joint statement from the US, UK, Europe and Japan on the need for "an overwhelmingly decarbonised power system in the 2030s" and "accelerating efforts" on climate action.

Instead Morrison is expanding fossil fuels through subsidising new gas-fired power plants and pushing to open massive new gas fields. He is spending \$600 million on a gas plant at Kurri Kurri but nothing on supporting renewable energy.

His Deputy Prime Minister's response to the G7 was to insist that coal

would be in use for "many more years to come".

The student Climate Strike on 21 May, the first since 2019, was a big success with 50,000 taking part across the country. The protests had clear demands to "fund our future not gas", opposing Morrison's gas expansion. Union speakers called for funding for jobs in renewable energy.

Another Climate Strike will be held in the lead up to November's international climate talks. We need to make sure it is far larger than in May.

Morrison's budget has locked in pay cuts after inflation for workers this year and next, due to pathetically low wage rises. Workers at General Mills in Sydney are showing how to fight, declaring an indefinite strike for a 3 per cent increase.

NSW nurses, teachers and paramedics are all starting to take action over pay. The state Liberal government has set a pay rise cap of 1.5 per cent, after last year's 0.3 per cent increase. The minimum wage has just been increased by 2.5 per cent.

In an important show of defiance, nurses are continuing stopwork actions despite an order from the Industrial Relations Commission. Paramedics also defied an order to halt industrial action.

Bigger public sector pay rises will help lift wages everywhere. Stepping up the strike action is the way to beat Morrison's agenda of more casualisation and low pay.

A fightback for climate action, jobs and wages can turn the tide against Morrison and help send the Liberals packing.

.....
Morrison is pushing the US and other nations to heighten tensions with China

Liberals' COVID contempt puts workers' lives at risk

By David Glanz

THE FOURTH Victorian lockdown has highlighted how the Morrison government's incompetence and negligence is putting millions at greater risk from the COVID pandemic.

The lockdown was a panicked reaction by the Victorian government, despite the significant improvements in public health from a year ago.

Almost 10 per cent of the state's population was tested during the outbreak. Contact tracing saw thousands go into isolation. The system, finally, was working, making lockdown unnecessary.

Meanwhile, the Coalition's contempt towards workers and their families has taken many forms.

Vaccines

Only 4.3 million doses had been delivered in Australia by 1 June just after the lockdown began—compared to 65 million in the UK. Critically, only 2 per cent of Australians had received a second dose.

Morrison repeatedly said rolling out vaccinations was not a race. For once, he's been true to his word. The rollout has been as slow as treacle.

The government promised in February that vulnerable people, including aged care and disability residents and staff, would be among those vaccinated first, within six weeks.

Yet by the beginning of June, it admitted that only 40,000 aged-care staff (out of a workforce of 366,000) had received their first jabs.

Others may have been vaccinated—the government simply doesn't know.

The government was still calling for tenders to deliver jabs in aged care homes on 18 May, barely a week before Victoria went into lockdown.

Worse, it became clear that the private companies delivering the jabs had not been contracted to vaccinate staff, who got doses only if some were left over. Those living or working in disability homes were treated even worse.

Years of neo-liberal neglect have hollowed out governments' ability to deliver basic services and workers and the vulnerable are paying the price.

The ACTU has called for two days' paid vaccination leave for workers in the care sector. If the government was serious about boosting vaccination rates, it would bring this in for all workers.



Above: Australia's vaccination effort—the responsibility of the Morrison government—is way behind schedule

Aged care

As the COVID cluster in Melbourne grew, it was revealed that the Liberals had thrown people in aged care to the wolves.

First it was revealed that, even as the Melbourne outbreak grew, there were aged care homes where no residents had been vaccinated. Health Minister Greg Hunt admitted at the end of May that there were still 29 nursing homes in Victoria that had yet to receive a single vaccination dose.

Then news leaked that the federal government had, in November, abandoned the scheme that paid aged care workers extra so that they would not need to work across more than one site.

Even when the scheme was running, it was little more than a token effort. As *The Age* reported, only 33 grants totalling a mere \$12.5 million were paid to aged care companies that operate about 90 of Victoria's 600 Commonwealth-regulated homes.

Yet the movement of low-paid casual workers across the sector was a major way that the virus travelled between aged care homes in 2020. The Coalition government would rather save a pittance than save lives.

We need to fight for an end to casualisation and for the nationalisation of private aged care.

Quarantine

There have been at least 21 virus breakouts from hotel quarantine. The east coast states have been call-

ing since last year for purpose-built quarantine facilities modelled on the highly successful site at Howard Springs in Darwin, where people stay in cabins with plenty of fresh air.

Morrison has dragged his feet throughout. Defence Minister Peter Dutton went so far as to dismiss Victoria's proposal as "smoke and mirrors".

A few weeks later, under pressure from the lockdown, Morrison finally supported a quarantine facility in Melbourne. But he insisted that it had to be *as well as* hotel quarantine, not instead—meaning the possibility of outbreaks will persist.

Wages

Morrison was similarly late to the party with financial support for workers stood down during the lockdown. Finally, he granted a miserly \$500 a week (\$325 for those working less than 20 hours).

Even that was riddled with conditions. The payment doesn't cover the first week of lockdown; it applies only in areas designated as "hot spots"; people getting any kind of benefit payment, however modest, get nothing; and it will be taxed.

Every step of the way, Morrison has reacted late and inadequately to the challenges of the pandemic.

He needs to be driven out of office. A campaign for an end to casualisation, for vaccination leave and for taking all aged care into public hands would be an excellent place to start that fight.

.....
Even as the Melbourne outbreak grew, there were aged care homes where no residents had been vaccinated

Unions, students, community say no to Kurri Kurri gas plant

By Niko Chlopicki

OPPOSITION IS growing to Scott Morrison's \$600 million plan for a new gas plant at Kurri Kurri in NSW.

Demands against his support for a "gas-fired recovery" and spending to expand fossil fuels were at the centre of the 21 May student Climate Strike.

Key unions have also opposed the new project. Allen Hicks, National Secretary of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), told the Sydney Climate Strike that, "The proposed Kurri Kurri gas peaking generation is a clear example of where a federal government gets it completely wrong. It tried to force the private sector into building a gas peaking station and they said, 'it's not viable and we're not going to do it'.

"So instead of listening to the experts what does the federal government do? They go and grab \$600 million of taxpayers' money and invest it in something that isn't viable.

"It's a disgrace that this federal government is wasting tax payers' dollars on something that it shouldn't be doing."

Instead, he argued, the money should be used to, "build some offshore wind... The offshore wind sector provides massive job opportunities to build towers, turbines, sub-sea foundations, cables, offshore substations, and work for maritime workers."

Offshore wind projects in the Hunter, Illawarra and Eden, near existing fossil fuel reliant communities in NSW alone, have the potential to create 7.2 GW of power as well as thousands of jobs in the maritime, electrical and manufacturing industries.

"The people in the regions around Kurri Kurri, the Hunter Valley, they deserve jobs, they deserve investment. But they don't deserve something that's not viable," said Hicks.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has also backed the call to fund offshore wind projects: "Government funding could support new port terminals and upgrades of steelworks and cable manufacturers to supply offshore wind projects..."

"What we do need is for the Federal Government to build publicly-owned renewable energy so we can rapidly reduce emissions, provide good jobs and a just transition for energy workers," Glen Williams, MUA



Above: Students in Newcastle at the School Strike for Climate walkout on 21 May opposing the Kurri Kurri gas plant

Newcastle branch Secretary, said in a recent statement.

Rather than spending public money on another gas project that will create just a handful of jobs and further contribute to global warming, public money should instead be spent on renewable energy.

Community opposition

There is also local opposition to the Kurri Kurri plant in the Hunter Valley. The Gas Free Hunter Alliance joined the Sydney Knitting Nannas, Northern Beaches Climate Action, Lock the Gate, and Coal Fields for Climate Action to protest outside NSW Planning Minister Rob Stokes' office on 4 June, calling on him to reject the project.

Submissions to the NSW Department of Planning process closed on 9 June, with 241 out of 247 submissions opposed to the plant. Over 10,000 people have signed a petition to the NSW Energy Minister.

"The overwhelming percentage of submissions opposed to the Morrison Government's foolish Kurri Kurri gas plant demonstrates just how few people would benefit from this polluting project. No one wants this gas-fired failure," Georgina Woods of the Lock the Gate Alliance said.

The Kurri Kurri site used to be an aluminium smelter and was purchased in 2020 by property developers and Liberal Party donors Jeff McCloy and John Stevens. To justify the \$600 million investment, the Morrison government is claiming that the plant will create jobs for the Hunter Valley

region and that more gas is needed to replace the closing Liddell power station.

Energy experts have universally rejected this, saying another gas "peaking" plant is not needed.

Another report by Victoria University's energy policy centre in June concluded that, although there are already three gas-powered peaking plants in NSW, there will be little demand for any of them in the future, let alone the extra electricity produced by Kurri Kurri.

The new plant is also likely to cost at least 50 per cent more to build than the \$600 million already committed, it said.

And, despite Morrison's promise of jobs, the Kurri Kurri project will provide only 600 temporary jobs during construction and just 20 once operational.

Its gas supply is slated to come from the Santos Narrabri project, which, among other things, will threaten the water supply from the Great Artesian Basin and will desecrate Gamilaraay lands in the Piliga forests.

Even after catastrophic bushfires last year, floods this year, record heat waves and rising sea levels, the Liberal government still refuses to invest in renewable energy.

We have to keep fighting to force them to change by continuing to build trade union support, support in universities and schools and the ongoing climate movement. This is the kind of power that can win climate jobs and a just transition.

.....
"It's a disgrace that this federal government is wasting tax payers' dollars on something that it shouldn't be doing"—Allen Hicks, ETU

General Mills workers stage indefinite strike for pay

By Rory Iarkins

WORKERS AT General Mills in Sydney were into their second week on strike as we went to press, fighting efforts to attack their conditions and demanding a decent pay rise.

The company has offered the 100 workers, members of the United Workers Union (UWU), just a 1.5 per cent pay rise and wants to change their rosters. Currently normal working hours are Monday to Friday—but the company wants changes in order to reduce access to overtime pay as part of a new enterprise agreement. It also wants to lock in lower rates of redundancy for new workers. Workers want a 3 per cent pay increase and to keep the current roster and conditions.

General Mills is a multinational food manufacturer, which in Australia produces brands including Old El Paso and Latina Fresh. Globally the company made over \$26 billion last year.

Workers have maintained a 24-hour a day picket at the factory in Rooty Hill. Supporters gathered for a family day on Saturday 12 June. Labor Industrial Relations Spokesperson Tony Burke told the workers, “This is a company that is making a lot of money. This is a company that during COVID made a huge expansion.

“How did they get that? Because of you working extra shifts when you were asked to, making sure the plant kept running when it needed to. So it’s no unreasonable to have a reasonable pay rise.” Local Labor MP Ed Husic and Angelo Gavrielatos from the Teacher’s Federation also spoke, congratulating workers on their stand.

The company recorded a \$4.5 billion increase global in sales and a 27 per cent increase in operating profits through the COVID crisis, while maintaining staff of up to 15 years on casual contracts.

The factory is continuing to operate with a small number of labour hire casuals still working despite the strike. A hard picket that shut the factory down altogether could force the company to accept workers’ demands within days—but would mean defying anti-strike laws.

Workers everywhere are facing years without a pay rise as bosses take advantage of the COVID crisis to hold down wages. The workers are General Mills are showing how to fight to shut up pay and improve conditions. They deserve everyone’s support.



Above: Striking workers at General Mills in Sydney

Rally calls for justice after police kill Gamilaroi man in Gunnedah

MORE THAN 100 family and friends of Gamilaroi man Michael Peachey rallied in Gunnedah in late May to demand justice and change.

The crowd chanted “Say his name—Michael Peachey” and “What do we want—justice”.

Michael was killed by NSW police on 20 May at his father’s house. He never regained consciousness after being hit with OC spray and a taser. His death brings the number of Indigenous deaths in custody to at least nine since March.

Family members say Michael’s mental health had been deteriorating in the week before he died. They had reached out to the local hospital, to Aboriginal services, to the mental health ward in Tamworth and to police, but no support had been forthcoming.

On the night he died, police were called again after Michael experienced a breakdown. There was a struggle and police responded with lethal force. Marlee Thomas, Michael’s sister-in-law, said: “Police brutality needs to stop. There is no need for the kind of force that killed Michael.

“This is a constant problem we have in Gunnedah, police brutality, especially against Aboriginal people. We have seen huge Black Lives Matter rallies across the country but still they kill our people. The movement needs to grow—we need justice and change.”

Helen Eason, from Nelly’s Healing Centre, said: “I run a family support service in Sydney and I have had to travel up here to Gunnedah to support this family because there is absolutely no support on the ground. It is disgraceful that there is nothing in place for our people.”

Greens MLC David Shoebridge said: “The nearest drug rehabilitation unit is 175km from Gunnedah, at Armidale, and its waiting list is the better part of 12 months’ long. This was a family that was let down when they most needed help.”

The Australian Institute of Criminology has announced it will now report the number of Indigenous deaths in custody every six months but Greens Senator Lidia Thorpe has called for real-time reporting.

“We have had a number of Aboriginal people die in custody this year alone. It’s just not good enough that these deaths won’t be reported in official statistics for up to two years,” Thorpe told *The Canberra Times*.

These deaths drive home once again the need for the government to implement all the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. They also show why the Black Lives Matter movement has raised the demand to defund the police. People with mental distress need support from trained professionals, not armed thugs in uniform.

David Glanz

Donate to support General Mills workers at www.chuffed.org/project/generalmillsstrike

Will communicative consent laws keep women safe?

By Caitlin Doyle

THE NSW government has announced plans to reform sexual consent laws that it says will deliver better justice to survivors of sexual assault.

The “affirmative” or “communicative consent” model, which will likely be voted on in September, means that a person does not consent to sexual activity unless they say or do something to communicate consent, and an accused person’s belief in consent won’t be considered reasonable unless they have taken steps to ascertain it.

The changes come out of a NSW Law Reform Commission review whose recommendations were handed down earlier this year.

The review was sparked by the high profile case of Saxon Mullins, who says she was raped at the age of 18 outside a Sydney nightclub by Luke Lazarus, the son of the club’s owner. The case went on for five years, after which the alleged rapist was let off after a judge found that, because Mullins froze during the attack, Lazarus had a “reasonable belief” that she had consented.

The changes are intended to stop this defence from being used, and to shift the onus of proof onto the accused.

The new model has been widely celebrated as a step towards providing greater justice for survivors of sexual assault and there are hopes that it will increase convictions.

A shift away from the victim-blaming that is currently enshrined in NSW law is welcome. No victim of assault should be blamed in court for not responding to or fighting off their assault in the “correct” way.

But the model is unlikely to deliver more justice for survivors of sexual assault.

Tasmania and Victoria

Similar laws around sexual consent were introduced in Victoria and Tasmania, in 2001 and 2004 respectively. Although rates of reporting of sexual assault increased overall, conviction rates have not.

In Tasmania, whose definition of consent was considered the “gold standard”, according to Monica Otłowski from the University of Tasmania’s Faculty of Law, the introduction of a law intended to establish “whether the victim showed ‘positive’ signs of consent... has not profoundly



Above: The March 4 Justice protests earlier this year were a cry of rage against the widespread experience of sexual assault

altered the course of rape trials, nor increased the conviction rates for sexual offences generally”.

In Victoria, defendants have still successfully argued that they believed the victim had consented, even in cases where this belief was not found to be “reasonable”. In one example, a man who raped a woman while she was asleep was let off after claiming that he genuinely believed that she was consenting.

In both jurisdictions, the rapist’s belief that the victim had consented has continued to take precedence over whether consent was actually “given”.

Otłowski argues that this is the result of prevailing sexist ideas, affecting juries and judges, that victims are at fault if they were intoxicated, flirting or froze before or during the assault, for example.

Even the Chairman of the Victorian Law Reform Commission, Tony North, has said that, “the problem with consent is probably not the law.” He argues that the sexism of older judges and barristers in particular, who routinely, “confuse... humiliate... denigrate” victims in court, means that even where consent law appears strong, it rarely results in successful prosecution.

The Victorian and Tasmanian models stipulate that defendants must take steps to ascertain consent. The impact of the proposal in NSW to require positive communication of consent will only be clear once it is tested in court.

In Australia, it is estimated that only around one in ten assaults are reported to police. Of those that go to court, only around one in ten result in prosecution. Many victims do not go to the police out of the well-founded fear that they will not be believed.

Around one in five women in Australia has experienced sexual assault. But while the reporting rate of sexual offences has increased over time, this has not been matched by an increase in the rate of conviction, which has decreased. This trend is reflected in other countries with similar laws, like England and Wales.

Changes in laws around sexual assault can have important symbolic implications. But we cannot rely on a sexist legal system—one overseen by the likes of Christian Porter for years—to deliver justice.

Even where convictions are obtained, perpetrators are sent into jails that do nothing to change their sexist ideas, and survivors rarely have access to adequate support services, whose funding has been cut down to the bone in recent decades.

We need to build a mass movement against sexism that delivers real material changes in women’s lives, demanding proper funding for women’s and domestic and sexual violence services, as well as affordable housing, decent jobs, better wages and free childcare.

Ultimately we will have to get rid of the system that breeds the sexism and sexual violence in the first place.

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Prevailing sexist ideas still affect juries and judges

New leader Chris Minns drifting NSW Labor further right

By James Supple

NSW LABOR has installed a new leader, Chris Minns, following the resignation of Jodi McKay in the aftermath of its loss in the Upper Hunter by-election.

The party has been out of office for a decade due to a legacy of privatisation and the rundown of public services during its last period in power, as well as findings of multi-million dollar corruption against former ministers Eddie Obeid, Ian Macdonald and Joe Tripodi.

Recent polling put Labor on just 28 per cent of the primary vote, another five points down on its 2019 election defeat. Liberal Premier Gladys Berejiklian has been able to weather her own scandals including corruption by her former partner and MP Daryl Maguire.

Labor's working class support has drained away after decades of backing neo-liberal policies that have left it hard to distinguish from the Liberals.

Minns' takeover will mean a further drift to the right.

When he ran for leader in March 2019 against Jodi McKay, several left unions weighed in against him, with Steve Murphy from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union declaring he had no confidence in Minns as a result of his views on "the role of the unions in the Labor Party, as well as his views on critical policy areas such as privatisation".

Minns used his inaugural speech in parliament to call for reduced union influence at Labor Party conferences, echoing right-wing moves against the unions from Kevin Rudd and former British Labour leader Tony Blair.

In a further abandonment of working class politics, Minns has declared that "the people of Australia are ambitious" and that Labor shouldn't be "antagonistic to that success". This echoes the long-running right-wing obsession with so-called "aspirational votes" and the idea that a focus on inequality and redistribution will alienate Labor from voters.

During his last run for leader Minns had the support of the right-wing Australian Workers Union, the shopworkers' SDA and the Health Services Union.

This time Labor Party head office swung behind him in an effort to prevent a months-long contest for the leadership.



Above: Newly installed NSW Labor leader Chris Minns

Under party rules the leader is now elected through a party membership ballot, alongside a vote in the parliamentary caucus.

Michael Daley, who took the party to the 2019 state election, was pressured to withdraw from the race. His racist comments before the last state election that "Asians with PhDs" were "taking the jobs" of young Australians mean he is still viewed as an electoral liability.

Minns has promised to present new policies instead of simply criticising the Liberal state government, calling for an end to new road tolls and more regional manufacturing jobs.

Public sector unions

Gladys Berejiklian's government has had the benefit of running the state through the pandemic, pushing up her approval rating.

But the Liberals are continuing to attack public sector workers—despite their crucial role as frontline staff during the COVID crisis. Hundreds more jobs are being cut in TAFE.

Teachers, paramedics and nurses are all gearing up for industrial action against a pay rise cap of just 1.5 per cent.

Paramedics in NSW receive the lowest wages in the country and have been offered a pathetic 1.5 per cent pay rise after just a 0.3 per cent increase last year. They took industrial action through imposing bans on call outs for 24 hours on 9 June.

In early June around 500 nurses and midwives took stopwork action

of between two hours and 24 hours across six regional hospitals at Belmont, Blue Mountains, Bowral, John Hunter, Shoalhaven, Springwood and Waratah, demanding a better pay rise, nurse to patient ratios and an end to understaffing. They have been offered just a 1.04 per cent pay increase.

Their union has vowed to continue their campaign despite orders from the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) banning further industrial action.

Teachers have also staged protests outside schools over teacher shortages and the failure to fill empty positions in schools, leading to higher workloads for staff.

United public sector wide strike action could put the heat on the Liberal government and build serious pressure to boost funding to public services.

But since 35,000 public sector workers rallied just after the Liberal government was elected in 2011, unions have backed away from taking on the government through any industrial campaign.

This has allowed the Liberals to get away with privatising bus routes, power stations, hospitals and public housing, as well as cuts to public sector wage rises.

A concerted union fightback, in defiance of the inevitable bans on strike action from the IRC, are key to undermining the Liberals and forcing the funding increases needed across schools, hospitals and public services.

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Labor's working class support has drained away after decades of backing neo-liberal policies

Big pharma's vaccine profits create eight new billionaires

By Ruby Wawn

WITH GOVERNMENTS around the world bankrolling the development of COVID vaccines, Big Pharma is expecting big profits this year. But millions of people around the world still can't get a jab.

At least nine new billionaires have been created as a result of profiteering from COVID vaccines.

A further eight existing billionaires have seen their combined wealth grow by \$32.2 billion as a result of stakes in pharmaceutical companies producing the vaccines according to a report from Oxfam.

As wealthy countries, including the US, UK and Australia, stock pile more than 87 per cent of available vaccines, only 0.2 per cent of vaccines have been left for people living in low-income countries.

With around 700 million people living in these countries, it is estimated only one in 500 people here have received a vaccine, compared to one in four people living in wealthy countries.

At the current vaccination rate, the People's Vaccine Alliance, a coalition of non-government organisations, estimates it will take 57 years for low-income countries to fully vaccinate their populations.

Many of these countries are also reckoning with second and third waves of the virus, with our neighbours in the western Pacific region recording their highest incidence of deaths as a result of COVID to date.

But the combined wealth of these new billionaires of \$19.3 billion would be enough to vaccinate the populations of low-income countries 1.3 times over.

Topping the list are the CEOs of Moderna and BioNTech at more than \$4 billion in wealth each.

These private companies profiteering from the crisis are doing so off the back of massive public investment. Globally over \$146 billion in public money has been invested in developing COVID vaccines.

Moderna alone received \$2.5 billion from the US Government, making its vaccine largely publicly funded. And Moderna is expected to record its first ever profit this year of \$US18.4 billion.

Pfizer, one of the pharmaceutical companies which decided to sell its vaccines for profit, has made \$3.5



billion in revenue from its COVID vaccine in the first three months of 2021 alone. And it expects to make a whopping \$26 billion in profit this year.

Patents and vaccine inequality

Pressure is on for big pharma's monopoly on the COVID vaccines to end, with the People's Vaccine Alliance saying: "These monopolies allow pharmaceutical corporations total control over the supply and price of vaccines, pushing up their profits."

But at the G20 Global Health summit last month, the rich countries offered no real commitment to fixing the vaccine inequalities.

Instead, a US-backed proposal brought by South Africa and India to waive intellectual property protections for the COVID vaccines was watered down by countries like the UK and Germany, which are home to large pharmaceutical industries.

The final declaration of the summit included a voluntary, not compulsory, commitment to transfer intellectual property rights.

While some G7 leaders including the US, UK, EU and Australia have pledged to donate 1 billion vaccine doses this year, Niko Lusiani from Oxfam America has said: "That's still a drop in the bucket compared to the need across the world."

Privatisation and profiteering has also derailed the distribution of vaccines across Australia, with tenders being given to private health companies

Above: BioNTech and Moderna have been responsible for six of the new billionaires created

to manage the rollout in aged care.

The Morrison government's sham-bolic vaccine rollout has seen only 2.7 per cent of the population fully vaccinated to date, despite aiming to have the entire population vaccinated by October.

The Government refuses to tell us how much they're spending to privatise the rollout but \$155.9 million was allocated in the 2021 federal budget to private contractors to deliver COVID vaccines.

The four contractors—Aspen Medical, Healthcare Australia, International SOS and Sonic Clinical Services—all have a history of donating to the major political parties, with Sonic donating more than half a million dollars to the Liberals between 2011 and 2017.

The government claimed all aged care residents and staff would be vaccinated in the first six weeks of the rollout. But as Melbourne entered its fourth lockdown, Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt revealed there were 74 residential aged care homes that were yet to receive a single dose of a vaccine, including 16 in Victoria.

But aged care providers who ordinarily deliver the influenza vaccine to their clients have been told they must apply for a tender to deliver the COVID vaccines.

Putting public health in the hands of private companies is a crime. Publicly funded healthcare should be distributed on the basis of human need, not corporate greed.

The combined wealth of the new billionaires would be enough to vaccinate low-income countries 1.3 times over

Israel's brutal dispossession continues despite ceasefire

By Miro Sandev

ISRAEL LAUNCHED renewed bombing of the Gaza Strip in June, a month after a ceasefire saw it pause 11 days of intense airstrikes.

The bombardment in May included the murder of 256 people, including at least 66 children, in what Palestinians in the Gaza Strip describe as the most intense airstrikes they have endured.

Israel destroyed schools, Red Crescent medical facilities and the buildings of media organisations covering the attacks. It targeted residential towers on the flimsy pretext that there may be some Hamas rebels in the basements. It massacred entire Palestinian extended families.

The assault forced at least 58,000 Palestinians to flee their homes and many thousands are now homeless.

Despite this, the bloody campaign did not amount to a victory for Israel. Israeli politicians had said that the bombing would not stop until there was “complete quiet” from the armed resistance groups like Hamas. But Hamas was able to continue firing rockets into Israel, some breaking through the air defence systems and killing Israelis.

Israel is even more worried about the mass protests that erupted throughout all of historic Palestine against the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem.

The strength of the protests and a general strike by Palestinian workers has stalled Israel's proposed evictions for now. But the threat still remains. At least 150 Palestinian households in the Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan areas of East Jerusalem have been served with expulsion notices and face legal action.

If Israel pushes ahead with the removal of the Palestinian families, it risks provoking another round of protests that could escalate.

Meanwhile, under the cover of the ceasefire and away from the media spotlight, Israeli militarised police have launched sweeping repression against Palestinian protesters to try to snuff out the resistance.

In a blatant show of force Israeli cops attacked worshippers at Al Aqsa Mosque shortly after the ceasefire was declared on 21 May, using tear gas and stun grenades.

Since then, Israeli cops have arrested more than 1000 Palestinians in



cities inside Israel's borders.

Israeli occupying soldiers are also stalking the streets of the West Bank, where they have killed 30 Palestinians since mid-May.

Netanyahu out

The attacks on Gaza and the uprising in response have provided a tense backdrop for efforts to form a new Israeli government following recent elections.

The outbreak of war was expected to turn opinion in Benjamin Netanyahu's favour, but it has not been enough to save him.

After failing to win an outright majority in the polls, he has been frozen out of government for the first time in 12 years and forced out as Prime Minister.

Some had warned that Netanyahu was leading Israel down the path of a civil war through sparking the mobilisation of Palestinians within the 1948 borders of Israel.

The long-running investigations into his corruption and cronyism have finally played politically against him.

Netanyahu tried but failed to form a coalition government before the deadline. The new coalition government will instead be led by the far-right Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, who is from the secular Zionist party Yesh Atid. They will serve as Prime Minister for two years each. Some smaller parties feature in the coalition too.

It will be the fifth government in just two years—a sign of the political

Above: Destruction in Gaza after the intense bombing in May

volatility in Israel. While the configurations in the Israeli Parliament may change, the policies of apartheid and illegal occupation remain.

Bennett and Lapid are in lockstep with Netanyahu opposing the fundamental questions of equal rights and freedoms for Palestinians, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and maintaining Israel's apartheid system of domination.

Bennett, who is leader of the New Right party, is even more right wing than Netanyahu. He previously headed up the far-right, orthodox Jewish party Jewish Home. He was also the leader of a Jewish settler group. He believes peace with Palestinians is impossible and has said the creation of a Palestinian state would be suicidal. When Palestinians protested in 2018, Bennett said Israeli troops should have a “shoot to kill” policy including for children.

Lapid is considered a “centrist” in Israeli politics because he supports a two-state solution. But he is not much better. He has said: “I am enthusiastically in favour of annexing the Golan Heights. My principle says maximum Jews on maximum land with maximum security and with minimum Palestinians”. He supports maintaining the Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

What is certain is that the instability will continue. The huge protests and the general strike carried off by the Palestinian resistance has given the Israeli regime a shake. For it to be fully toppled, these will have to spread throughout the whole region.

Israel destroyed schools, Red Crescent medical facilities and the buildings of media organisations

Colombia paralysed by protests against tax hikes and inequality

By Joshua Look

MILLIONS OF Colombians, at times up to 10 per cent of the population, have been on the streets for over a month against attempts to make ordinary people pay for the costs of the COVID crisis by the right-wing government of President Ivan Duque.

The revolt began as a national strike called by students and trade unions against tax increases on basic goods such as food and gas. It has now broadened to include other grievances after the government was forced to withdraw these initial changes. These include limited employment opportunities, poor social services, widespread inequality, and the drawing out of peace proceedings to bring a 50-year conflict with the left-wing militant group The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) to a close.

Centered around the town of Cali in the country's south-west and the capital of Bogota, barricades block the streets and there have been repeated clashes with the police and the military. But protests have spread all across the country.

Road blockades have affected food distribution and forced the Cerrejon coal mine to shut down completely.

Human Rights Watch believes at least 68 people have been killed, with over 800 injured as Duque struggles to regain control through violent crackdowns. Police have used firearms and live ammunition against protesters.

COVID economic crisis

Whilst Colombia has long been a country of severe inequality, the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation as underfunded social welfare programs offered little protection to the country's most vulnerable. The government's failure over the health crisis has seen almost 100,000 die from the virus so far and a deadly third wave sweeping the country since April.

Before COVID around 60 per cent of Colombia's workforce operated in the informal economy in occupations like street vendors, however months of social distancing and lockdowns have cost many their livelihoods. In 2020 Colombia's economy shrank by 7 per cent and the poverty rate climbed from 6.8 per cent to a brutal



Above: Mass protests hit the streets in Colombia

42.5 per cent.

The strategy, therefore, of the Colombian government to respond to economic crisis by bleeding the population further through the taxation of basic services like electricity and water will inevitably worsen the circumstances of those already suffering and can be described as nothing short of a callous disregard for millions of lives.

Furthermore, that the government is justifying the relegation of millions to destitution in the name of economic repair after the government has mismanaged the country for years. This has only aggravated the situation and increased people's rage.

Whilst the current protests could be seen as a continuation of similar campaigns in 2018 and 2019, also organised by umbrella group the National Strike Committee, there is a feeling that this time is different and that meaningful change is within reach.

The movement has already forced Duque to drop not just the tax increase on food and gas but also a neo-liberal health bill that would have given more power to private health companies and a plan to spend billions on military fighter jets despite the desperate need for spending to tackle the COVID crisis. The economic cost of the barricades and disruptions for the ruling class, estimated to already exceed \$2 billion, is undoubtedly behind this political backflip.

Whilst protestors have won these

victories, there is still a long road ahead if significant change is to be achieved. For instance, Duque currently still plans to proceed with his main suite of punitive taxation and pension reforms.

Another major demand which remains unaddressed is the appalling police violence. Colombia has a reputation of vicious brutality towards the populace from police.

There has been immense public anger about police repression of the protests, following the death of student Lucas Villa, who was shot eight times by police, and the death of a young woman in Popayan, who tragically committed suicide after suffering serious physical abuse at the hands of police. These cases are nowhere near unique in Colombia, and the public is demanding change.

A diverse protest coalition which includes students, indigenous peoples and trade unions has been the driving force behind the movement's victories so far. The focus should therefore be on maintaining this momentum in order to achieve their full list of demands.

It is only by broadening the base of the movement through a wider coalition of workers organisations, and calling for further disruption, strikes and protests that the right-wing government will be forced to bend to the will of the people.

The mass uprising and victories for equality and against neo-liberalism in Colombia will resonate across Latin America and the rest of the world.

Months of social distancing and lockdowns have cost many their livelihoods

ZIONISM AND IMPERIALISM—WHY THE US ARMS ISRAEL

Israel was established as a colonial settler state with the backing of the great powers, argues **James Supple**, and is still key to imposing Western control of the Middle East

PROTESTS IN support of Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah have spread across all of historic Palestine—drawing worldwide solidarity. The evictions there symbolise Israel’s ongoing land grab—a colonial effort at driving out the Palestinian population that began in earnest in 1948.

Israel’s foundation was a product of the Zionist movement that emerged in the 1880s and 1890s as a response to antisemitism in Europe. Vicious pogroms organised by the Russian government had seen thousands of Jewish people killed.

The Zionists argued that Jews would be safe only when they had their own state to protect them, and encouraged Jewish migration to Palestine, promoting Jewish religious and historical connections to the area.

But the land was already home to a significant Arab population. So from the beginning Zionist leaders like Theodor Herzl recognised that a Jewish state there was impossible without the backing of the imperialist powers.

The Jewish state would be a European colonial project, based on a process similar to the dispossession of Indigenous people in Australia.

Britain was the leading power of the day. Just before it took control of Palestine following the First World War, Zionist leaders negotiated with the British government and gained their support, through the infamous Balfour Declaration, for a “national home for the Jewish people” there.

The Zionists offered to do the bidding of British imperialism, with Chaim Weizmann, later Israel’s first President, writing that a Jewish state would “form a very effective guard for the Suez Canal”.

Then in November 1947, as British rule collapsed, the UN backed a partition plan to carve up Palestine between a Jewish state and an Arab state.

Over the months that followed, armed Jewish militias organised a campaign of terror to drive around 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, in an act of ethnic cleansing designed to grab more land for Israel. Palestinians describe this as “the Nakba” or catastrophe.

Racism against the Arab population went hand in hand with Jewish colonisation. Zionist settlers sought to exclude Arabs from the economy. They bought up land from absentee Arab landlords and evicted Palestinian peasant farmers.

The Histadrut, the Zionist trade union, raised funds for pickets to exclude Arab workers from jobs and to boycott and destroy Arab products.

Ongoing dispossession

Seizing more land has been a continuing obsession for Israeli leaders, leading to ongoing efforts to dispossess and exclude Palestinians.

The residents of Sheikh Jarrah are far from the only ones fighting for their homes. Soon after the ceasefire with Hamas, an Israeli court ordered the demolition of buildings that are home to 1500 Palestinians in Silwan, also in East Jerusalem, to make way for an Israeli archaeological park.

“For years Israel has sought to expand illegal settlements in the area of Silwan, forcibly displacing more than 200 Palestinians from their homes,” Amnesty International noted.

Israel’s efforts at dispossession, and the replacement of Palestinians with Jewish settlers, are even more obvious in the West Bank.

East Jerusalem and the West Bank were seized in Israel’s war of 1967. It has controlled them through a military occupation ever since.

In the West Bank a state-sponsored process of land confiscation and settlement building has pushed Palestinians

The Jewish state would be a European colonial project

into an ever smaller and smaller area.

A landmark Human Rights Watch report in April said that Israel’s actions there add up to the crime of apartheid under international law. The report is significant because it comes from a mainstream US non-government organisation.

It found Israel had confiscated land equal to “more than one-third of the West Bank”.

The Jewish settlements are connected to Israel through roads and military checkpoints, and settlers live under Israeli law. But the Palestinian population live under military occupation, with few rights. Under the “peace process” established in 1993, 60 per cent of the West Bank forms part of “Area C”, under full Israeli control. Palestinians there are prevented from building homes without permits that are hard to obtain.

“Israeli authorities have razed thousands of Palestinian properties in these areas for lacking a permit, leaving thousands of families displaced,” the report says. At the same time, “Israeli authorities began construction on more than 23,696 housing units between 2009 and 2020 in Israeli settlements in Area C.”

This shows how Israel operates as a racist, apartheid state.

Across both Israel and its occupied territories in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, there is a roughly similar population of Jews and Arabs, Human Rights Watch points out.

As a result Israel’s leaders are obsessed about the “demographic ‘threat’ that Palestinians pose”. Outgoing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted in 2019 that “Israel is not a state of all its citizens” but “the nation-state of the Jewish people and only them”.

Earlier, he had argued that if Palestinian citizens inside Israel “reach 35-40 per cent of the country, then the

Jewish state will be annulled”.

His four immediate predecessors as Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Barak and Shimon Peres all made similar comments.

Even then Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, often considered an advocate of peace with the Palestinians, argued in 1993 that “the red line for Arabs is 20 per cent of the population, that must not be gone over,” because “I want to preserve the Jewish character of the state of Israel”.

US imperialism

The Middle East’s oil reserves took on vital strategic importance for the world’s imperialist powers during the First World War—and have been the source of immense wealth and power ever since.

After 1945, uprisings against European colonialism saw a range of newly independent states emerge in the region, and the rise of an Arab nationalist movement. The new regimes attempted to nationalise assets controlled by the West, including the Suez canal in Egypt and the oil reserves in Iran. This presented new challenges for the Western imperialist powers who sought to control the area.

It also increased Israel’s importance as a reliable watchdog state for Western imperialist interests. As a colonial outpost, Israel has become a highly militarised society.

When the US became the world’s dominant power after 1945, it also became Israel’s key sponsor. The country has received around \$190 billion in US aid since then, more than any other country. Increasingly this has taken the form of military aid, as part of a US policy designed to supply Israel with the latest in high-tech weaponry and ensure it maintains what the US calls a “qualitative military edge” over neighbouring states.

Since 1999 the US has provided 10-year agreements, through Memoranda of Understanding, that commit to ongoing aid payments. The most recent was signed by President Barack Obama in 2016 committing to \$38 billion in aid for the financial years 2019-2028.

The scale of US support reflects the importance of the Middle East and its oil reserves to its strategy for global dominance.

And Israel has proven its importance to the US with a series of military victories over the Arab states—especially the 1967 war, when it defeated the combined strength of Egypt, Syria and Jordan, and the 1973 Yom Kippur war when it defeated



Above: An Israeli soldier defends Israeli settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank

Egypt and Syria again. These helped force the Arab regimes to accept US domination of the Middle East.

US President Joe Biden once summed up Israel’s importance to the US by saying: “If there were not an Israel, we would have to invent one to make sure our interests were preserved.”

As it began bombing Gaza in May, Biden pushed ahead with a further \$950 million of weapons sales and

personally stressed that Israel had a right to “defend itself”.

Australia, as a strong supporter of US power globally, is also a firm backer of Israel’s violence.

The liberation of Palestine relies on defeating Western imperialist power in the Middle East, in order to construct a democratic, secular state in Palestine where Jews and Arabs share equal rights.

It’s not antisemitic to oppose Israel

OPPOSITION TO Israel’s bombing of Gaza has produced growing sympathy for the Palestinians. In Queensland, the Labor Party state conference passed a motion condemning the “ongoing Israeli annexation by stealth of Palestinian land” and the “ethnic cleansing of Palestinians through the expansion of illegal settlements”.

The right of the party has reacted with fury. Adam Slonim, co-convenor of Australia-Israel Labor, even claimed the motion was “moving from anti-Zionism to anti-Semitism”, because it “blamed Israel entirely for the recent conflict” without condemning Hamas for firing rockets into Israel.

But this is not a conflict between two equal sides. Israel has the world’s fourth most powerful military, backed by the US with the latest in high-tech weaponry. The Queensland Labor motion was quite right to recognise its “routine oppression and dehumanisation of Palestinian people ... condemning them to live under perpetual Israeli occupation”. Palestinians have a right to resist this injustice.

A Facebook post by the Melbourne Uni ALP club echoing the popular chant at Palestine rallies “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” has also been denounced as “antisemitic” because, it’s claimed, it calls for the toppling of the Israeli state. Nine News papers claimed it sent a “major wave of panic through federal Labor”.

But as the widely respected NGO Human Rights Watch has argued, Israel is committing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians. Its actions have made any hope of a viable two state solution impossible.

This means the demand for a single democratic state, where both Jews and Palestinians live with equal rights, is growing in popularity. Such a state is incompatible with Zionism, the existence of a racially Jewish state based on the exclusion of Arab Palestinians. And that means the state of Israel must be dismantled and replaced.

There is nothing antisemitic about this aim—it is the only path to real peace and justice for the Palestinians.

CARCERAL FEMINISM— WILL NEW LAWS AND LONGER SENTENCES PROTECT WOMEN?

New laws around coercive control have been proposed as a way to tackle violence against women. But the police can never be relied on to protect women, argues **Thandi Bethune**

THE RECENT outpouring of rage against sexism and sexual assault has produced renewed pressure for action. With the repeated sexual assault scandals within the Liberal Party and the mass demonstrations calling for an end to sexism and sexual violence against women, people are desperate for solutions.

One proposal is for harsher sentences for violence against women, or new criminal offences like coercive control, advocated by journalist and author Jess Hill in her book and TV series *See what you made me do*. But this means putting more powers in the hands of police, who have an appalling record on taking violence against women seriously.

It is also likely to result in more imprisonment among marginalised communities including Aboriginal people.

This approach of relying on increased policing, prosecution, and imprisonment as the primary solution to violence against women has been termed carceral feminism.

Carceral feminism ignores the ways in which race, class, gender identity, and immigration status leave certain women more vulnerable to violence and that greater criminalization often places these same women at risk of state violence.

Casting policing and prisons as the solution to domestic violence both justifies increases to police and prison budgets and diverts attention from the underfunding of programs that enable survivors to escape, such as shelters, public housing, and welfare.

It is undeniable that domestic violence is out of control.

In Australia around eight women a day are hospitalised and on average one woman is killed by their partner every week.

People are desperate for solutions and as the police and government fail to take it seriously many are concluding that new laws and harsher policing

will make a difference.

But relying on the police can never be the solution to violence against women.

Since the 1970s a push from feminist groups for harsher sentencing and responses towards domestic violence has led to mandatory arrest laws in over half of US states.

This means that when an instance of domestic violence is reported, police have to arrest someone. In many cases this leads to police arresting the victim of abuse, or a dual arrest where both parties are arrested.

What began as a measure to ensure domestic violence is taken more seriously is leading to victims of abuse, usually women, being further traumatised and dragged through the legal system.

This is because sexism is deeply entrenched within the police force. The police making decisions on who is responsible are likely to have a skewed perspective, considering studies have shown at least 40 per cent of US police officers are domestic violence perpetrators themselves—three or four times the rate in the wider population.

Research by Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety last year found that almost half of the Indigenous women murdered by an intimate partner in Queensland had previously been labelled by police as the perpetrator of domestic violence. It found that, “racism, poor relationships with local communities, misogyny, and the patriarchal culture of the police service” were an ongoing problem in tackling domestic violence.

This highlights the problem with giving police further powers.

Coercive control laws

The horrific murders by their partners of two Queensland women, Doreen Langham in February and Hannah Clark last year, despite having sought

New laws will lead to further incarceration of marginalised communities and vulnerable people

help from the police for domestic violence on multiple occasions, have caused particular shock.

In response Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk has announced the creation of a taskforce to consult on introducing coercive control legislation.

Coercive control describes a form of emotional abuse that can involve threats, intimidation and humiliation in order to exercise control of a partner. In many cases it is also a precursor to physical violence and murder.

While coercive control is undoubtedly a form of abuse, criminalising it creates the potential for many more problems.

Significantly, it too relies on police judging whether behaviour is a pattern of coercion and choosing whose side of the story to believe.

These laws will lead to further incarceration of marginalised communities and vulnerable people.

The case of Yamatji woman, Ms Dhu, is a prime example of this. In August 2014 police were called to her home responding to the breach of an apprehended violence order.

However, upon arrival, rather than help Ms Dhu the police arrested her for outstanding fines. Over two days in custody she reported severe pain and eventually loss of sensation in her legs.

Both the police and hospital staff repeatedly dismissed her symptoms with one officer claiming, “She is a junkie coming off drugs. She is faking now that she can’t get up.”

An hour later Ms Dhu died from an infection caused by a broken rib inflicted by her partner.

The racism and negligence Ms Dhu experienced speaks volumes as to why women, and Indigenous women in particular, often don’t trust police and are reluctant to seek help for domestic violence.

As Indigenous journalist and

researcher Amy McGuire has written, “For many Aboriginal women, the justice system is structurally violent, and the police are aggravators rather than protectors.”

Indigenous women can even be reluctant to report domestic violence because of the extreme consequences for Indigenous men charged under a racist criminal justice system—including the prospect of death in custody.

According to Professor Kerry Carrington, of the Queensland University of Technology’s Centre for Justice, the answer lies in all female police stations, and she is pushing for Queensland police to try this.

Carrington claims that, “because most police officers are male, and most victims of gender violence are female, you have this structural problem in that the vast majority of women do not feel comfortable and do not want to report to or do not want to risk having to disclose to men.”

However, the problem is not that police officers are men, it is the institution of the police force itself.

There has already been a huge increase in female officers over the last 30 years, from just 3 per cent of the Queensland police in 1983 to 29 per cent last year.

This has done nothing to improve police handling of violence against women. Just as female bosses are not the answer to women’s liberation, neither are female police.

Nor does simply imprisoning men who abuse women solve the problem. In fact because prisons are hotbeds of sexism and abuse themselves, the likelihood of people reoffending when they leave is very high.

A 2019 Australian Institute of Criminology study showed that the rates for domestic violence offenders reoffending within their lifetime was as high as 80 per cent, with 23 per cent reoffending within the first six months.

Another reason new offences or tougher laws will not work is that the threat of prison or criminal sanctions usually have little effect on abuser’s behaviour.

Queensland’s crime statistics show that the state’s domestic violence breaches have doubled in the past six years resulting in thousands of women being contacted by their abusers and in some cases, as with Doreen Langham, killed by men the police said they would be safe from.

In response former Queensland



Above: Police attempts to deal with domestic violence are still failing

Law Society President Bill Potts said, “It’s extremely disturbing because it shows both a pattern of lawlessness and an increasing disregard for, and contempt of, the court.”

And he is right, fear of the law has little impact on the actions of an abusive partner.

Solutions

If tougher laws and more police aren’t the answer what is?

The answer that is proposed by most domestic violence services, the media, and many victims of assault are education campaigns that encourage respect and equality for women.

While there is nothing wrong with this, it fails to address the systemic causes of sexism and violence. It is not that abusers are naive as to their actions, that they cannot understand that acts of violence are bad.

Sexist violent behaviour is born out of the sexist and violent system we live in that perpetuates oppressive ideas about women’s role in society.

Integral to this is the nuclear family, where women traditionally raise the next generation of workers, while men go to work as the family breadwinner.

The family is the source of the sexist ideology that says women are innately more caring, and encourages sinister ideas that women are weak or inferior to men, and should be obedient and tolerant.

Capitalism relies on the family and the subordination of women because the ruling class is unwilling to pay for

the socialisation of domestic tasks like childcare, caring for elderly relatives, cooking and cleaning.

Instead the family and mostly women step in to provide this at as little cost to the system as possible. It is estimated that the unpaid labour associated with childrearing saves the Australian state \$345 billion every year.

In addition, work and especially poverty are a source of immense alienation, stress and humiliation—for women as well as men.

These stresses are brought home to the family with the expectation that it will provide the love and support to alleviate them.

When this fails, it can manifest in men’s outbursts of violence and desperate attempts to gain control. Thus, to tackle domestic violence we must also alleviate the external pressures that capitalism places on people which trigger it.

In the short term, increased efforts to reduce the obstacles of leaving an abusive relationship, through adequate funding for domestic violence services, counselling and shelters, free childcare as well as gender equality within our workplaces can make a real difference.

But while we live under a system that oppresses and humiliates people, and relies on pitting working people against each other, we will continue to see sexism and violence towards women.

That means we need to connect the fight for proper services and spending to a fight against the whole capitalist system.

Antidote to the new Cold War panic on China

China Panic

By David Brophy
Published by La Trobe
University Press
\$32.99

DAVID BROPHY'S book *China Panic* is a timely intervention into the growing nationalist hysteria about China. Shortly after the book's release, Defence Minister Peter Dutton flagged an anticipated increase in US troop rotations in the Northern Territory. He said that, facing a growing threat from China, Australia "must be prepared for any contingency".

Similarly, Scott Morrison is determined to fan the flames of conflict between China and the US—two nuclear powers. In the lead up to the G7 Summit in Cornwall he gave a Cold War-style address warning China's rise is a looming threat to the free world.

China Panic aims to counter exactly this kind of dangerous war-talk which is becoming louder by the day. Brophy is an historian who has studied and visited China's Xinjiang province, as well as an active participant in the debates and protests at universities in support of Hong Kong, Palestine and other issues.

In the introduction, Brophy points out that the belligerence of the Australian government is bolstered by a torrent of anti-China propaganda from politicians of all stripes, intelligence agencies, the media, think tanks, journalists and commentators. Overwhelmingly, the terms of debate have been about how and why to engage in conflict with China, rather than whether to.

The first four chapters



usefully review Australia's current "China panic" and put it in context. Brophy points out that rhetoric about China's threat to democracy and a "rules based" international order is deeply hypocritical.

The credibility of such rhetoric depends on ignoring the fact that Australia has joined the US in numerous, immensely destructive wars; and on pretending the US encirclement of the globe with a belt of 800 military bases is a neutral act.

The book is at its strongest in the chapter on "Influencing the Region", which argues Australia is a "sub-imperialist" power. This provides a powerful explanation of the particular virulence of the anti-China agitation from Australia's ruling class.

Brophy argues that Australia has always depended on an "ally capable of calling the shots in Asia". In order to cement the increasingly contested US presence in the region Australia is convinced it: "can't afford to simply 'tag along' with America's efforts to uphold its dominance: Australia has to encourage

Washington to step up the fight."

This is what drives Australia to be "more imperialist than empire itself". Morrison's pre-G7 speech is a case in point.

Key battlegrounds

Later chapters focus on key ideological battlegrounds in the China debate: Australian university campuses, Xinjiang and Hong Kong. The latter two chapters offer some of the most interesting insights in the book.

Brophy describes "Let's talk about Hong Kong" meetings organised on Australian campuses during the Hong Kong

China Panic is an important counter to the warmongering of the Australian ruling class

democracy protests, in a context where the media narrative portrayed mainland Chinese are unthinking dupes of China Communist Party propaganda. Attended by both mainland Chinese and Hong Kong students, these meetings involved genuine critical discussion and indicated the sympathy for the Hong Kong protests amongst mainland students. The meetings demonstrated the falsity of anti-Chinese stereotypes and indicated an avenue for change in China that doesn't involve Western imperialism.

The chapter on Xinjiang is also a highlight. It is critical of the way Chinese state persecution of the Muslim Uyghurs is held up as proof of China's unique barbarism, without minimising the extent of the China's crimes.

The chapter outlines how the persecution of Uyghurs was legitimised internationally by the Islamophobia the West used to justify its recent wars in the Middle East. It details how abuse of Uyghurs was mirrored across the border in Afghanistan, with

extensive war crimes committed by Australian troops.

The analysis of anti-Chinese racism—now the fastest growing form of racism in the country—is also timely. His chapter on "Sovereignty, Values and Racism" explains escalating anti-Chinese racism as a product of elite policy.

Despite the book's strengths, the discussion is too often framed in terms of foreign policy alternatives should Australia adopt. Yet foreign policy is always determined by what the ruling class understands to be in its own interests. There are economic and political imperatives to Australia maintaining its dominant imperialist role in the region.

An insistence on the threat that Australia and the US pose to global peace, democracy and national self-determination is the clearest answer to Morrison's dangerous sabre rattling.

Overall, *China Panic* is an important counter to the warmongering of the Australian ruling class, motivated as always by profit and strategic advantage.

The *Australian Financial Review* and *The Australian* both recently surveyed new books on the China conflict. Alongside anti-China diatribes like *Red Zone* by Peter Hartcher, *China Panic* distinguishes itself as the sole critical voice.

The disturbing ruling class unanimity about confronting with China is a reminder that the opposition we need will only come from ordinary people and workers. *China Panic* is a much needed contribution to that effort.

Adam Adelpour

Attenborough's 'A life on our planet' is no guide for climate action

A life on our planet Screening on Netflix

FOCUSING ON his extraordinary career documenting the natural world from 1954 to the present day, David Attenborough's Netflix documentary *A life on our planet* is a plea for action to end humanity's destructive impact.

But framed as the story of how "man" came to decimate "wild", when it comes to locating the causes and solutions to environmental destruction it comes up short. Attenborough not only attributes the wrong causes for this destruction but argues for measures that do nothing to challenge its essentially capitalist roots.

The documentary covers everything from the impacts of deforestation, commercial over-fishing, farming, and the cascading effects of carbon emissions on the planet. We witness the brutal decimation and extinction of animal species, the disappearance of polar ice-caps, the bleaching of coral reefs, and horrific fires like the ones Australia experienced at the beginning of 2020. The planet is hurtling towards catastrophe. Major change is needed, and soon.

Population growth

What is driving the destruction? For Attenborough, the answer lies with unsustainable human consumption and population.

This is a common view that can be traced back to the 18th century conservative political economist, Thomas Malthus. Malthus argued that population growth would eventually outstrip the capacity to feed people, resulting in poverty and economic crisis.

Attenborough echoes



him, remarking that "human beings have overrun the world" and that "we" as a species, are all essentially to blame for the destruction of "the wild". The documentary reinforces the point multiple times through statistics linking growing population size, increasing carbon emissions, and the decreasing percentage of wilderness remaining through the years of the famed presenter's life. As human populations grow, so does environmental destruction—so the story goes.

Attenborough points out that population growth is already declining in rich countries and argues that the best way to stop population growth globally is by improving people's health, education and standards of living. While this would be welcome, it also casts blame on populations in the "global south".

In fact climate change is a problem largely caused by rich, industrialised countries. Not only have the bulk of emissions over the past 150 years come from rich countries, but these same countries

also have higher per capita emissions than the rest of the world. The focus on population also opens a door to racist proposals to limit immigration from the global south.

The documentary gives the impression that everyone is equally or at least comparably responsible for environmental destruction. On the contrary, just 100 companies were responsible for 71 per cent of global carbon emissions between 1998 and 2015.

Environmental destruction is not a problem of human society in general, but a problem of capitalism and how production is organised.

Under capitalism, a small minority of people running large corporations and governments make the decisions that are destroy-

ing our planet. Decisions about what to produce and how companies are run are determined not on the basis of human or environmental needs, but what is profitable. Ordinary people's purchase or consumption of goods happens down the line from where these decisions are made, with little ability to influence them.

Market conditions

Governments such as our own could be pursuing the rapid shift to renewable energy we need. Instead, they insist we wait for the right market conditions to arise to stimulate private investment. Instead of banning new oil and coal developments, these continue because they remain massively profitable.

At one point in the documentary Attenborough exclaims that, "It's crazy that our banks and our pensions are investing in fossil fuels." These crazy decisions are the result, not of ordinary people's consumption habits, but of the way that capitalism's insatiable drive for profit informs decisions on where to invest.

Attenborough blames unsustainable human consumption and population

Attenborough offers a diverse suite of other solutions, including switching from fossil fuels to renewable energy, adopting sustainable fishing practices, and a plant-based diet. What all his proposed solutions have in common are that they ignore the capitalist roots of the environmental crisis and the barriers capitalism places on measures to address it.

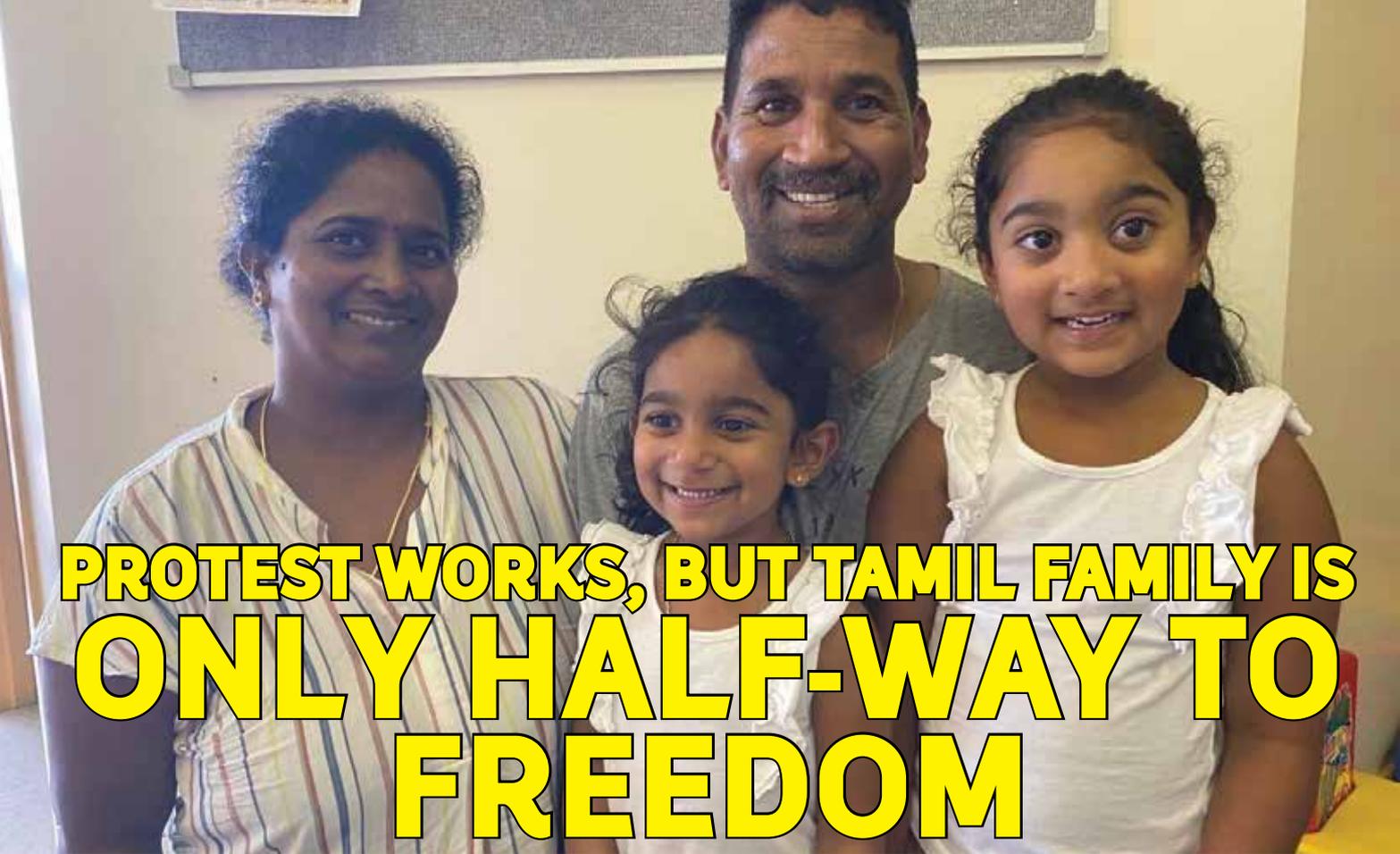
For example, one of his proposals is to extend no-fishing zones—currently confined to small geographic areas—over large areas of the ocean through global co-operation. But in a competitive global economy, any company or country that refuses to join this effort gains a competitive advantage and can make higher profits. In a world that is also deeply structured by inequality, fishers in poor countries would also reject an agreement that takes away their livelihood.

Although Attenborough's documentary vividly describes the severe and wide-ranging destruction of the planet, it misidentifies population as the central problem and market-friendly measures as the solution.

We must instead locate the roots of environmental destruction squarely in capitalism and demand solutions that address both problems together. And, crucially, we must orient to empowering the global working class as the agents of change and potential gravediggers of the rotten system that is killing the planet.

This means building on the inspiring global climate strikes led by school students in 2019 before COVID-19 hit, which mobilised hundreds of thousands of students, workers and unionists.

Tom Fiebig



PROTEST WORKS, BUT TAMIL FAMILY IS ONLY HALF-WAY TO FREEDOM

By Ian Rintoul

PROTEST WORKS! That's the lesson from the last couple of intense weeks that has finally seen the Murugappan Tamil family reunited and put in community detention in Perth.

Protest erupted around the country after four-year-old Tharnicaa was medivacced from Christmas Island detention to hospital in Perth dangerously ill with blood poisoning associated with undiagnosed pneumonia.

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the Perth hospital, with Doctors for Refugees calling on medical staff to repeat the stand of Queensland's Lady Cilento hospital staff in 2016, over Nauru baby Asha, and refuse to release Tharnicaa to detention.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) joined the outcry, with an open letter signed by nine medical organisations, calling for an urgent release of the family.

The RACP made even stronger demands, with President, Jacqueline Small, saying: "We want the Australian government to listen to what medical experts have been saying for years now, that Australia must also release all asylum-seekers from detention facilities and provide them with support they will need for this transition."

Tharnicaa's father, Nades, and sister, Kopika, were flown off Christmas Island, to Perth, where the family will live in community detention once Tharnicaa is well enough to leave hospital.

Above: The Murugappan family—Priya, Nades and their two kids Tharnicaa and Kopika

It's been 16 years since Liberal Party backbenchers forced Howard to release children from detention. But once again, after protest rallies across Australia (including in their old hometown of Biloela) a number of Liberal backbenchers have been pushed to break ranks.

While Liberals Katie Allen and Jason Falinski and the Nationals' Ken O'Dowd timidly called for the family's return to the mainland, Liberal Trent Zimmerman called for the family to have a "long term future in Biloela". Barnaby Joyce showed rare insight, explaining that if the Tamil girls "were Jane and Sally" they would have been allowed to resettle in Australia long ago.

Meanwhile Liberal Party war-horses like Amanda Vanstone were trotted out to repeat the lines about "stopping the boats" and to insist that the compassionate thing was to keep them on Christmas Island.

There is no doubt that the family's release is a win for the "Home to Bilo" campaign and the refugee movement. But the Minister is still keeping the family in detention in Perth. It will take much more protest to force the government to allow the family to go back to Biloela, let alone to actually grant visas to the family.

For the past 25 years, the Coalition has invested an enormous amount of political capital in its anti-refugee policy. Playing the refugee card has been a key plank in the way it understands its electoral success.

We have seen their vindictive "cat and mouse" tactics before. The Coalition was horrified when it suffered parliamentary defeat in 2019 and the Medevac Bill became law. Growing protest at Brisbane's Kangaroo Point and the Mantra and Park hotels in Melbourne forced the government to release around 100 refugees transferred under the Medevac Act.

But two years later (and more than eight years in detention overall), more than 90 refugees are rotting in hotels and detention to show the government still holds the whip hand.

The power that got the Tamil family off Christmas Island—protest power—is the power that can break the hold of border protection politics.

19 July 2021 marks the eighth anniversary of offshore detention, backed by both Labor and the Liberals. We need to recognise the ruthlessness and political purpose behind the Coalition's persecution of asylum seekers and refugees.

The government is not about to see the error of its ways and make an exception for the Tamil family. It knows that its anti-refugee policy is on trial. Its treatment of the Murugappans is one very public example of how it treats other asylum-seekers.

It is going to take still more determined protest to get the Murugappans "home to Bilo". And we need to link the fight to free the Tamil family with the fight to free all those still being victimised in detention, on and offshore, and win them permanent protection.

It will take more protest to force the government to allow the family back to Biloela, let alone to actually grant them visas

Solidarity