

# Solidarity

Issue No. 153 / October–November 2021

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# DON'T LET MORRISON BURN THE PLANET FUND CLIMATE JOBS NOW



## VACCINE MANDATE

Vilifying CFMEU protesters  
will only build the right

## AUKUS PACT

Why Australia's rulers  
choose to side with the US

## CLIMATE

Why COP26 summit  
won't save the planet

# 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.

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## Things they say

**I think those industries have a great future**

Energy Minister Angus Taylor on the future of coal, oil and gas

**I know I've lost the argument. My whole company's against me. I know that against these huge players, all the big political parties, my own employer, all the media and big media outlets, what am I? Just someone on the sidelines.**

Andrew Bolt, distraught that the Murdoch media is promoting the toothless 2050 net zero target instead of outright climate denial

**They've now had 30 years of blah, blah, blah and where has that led us?**

Climate activist Greta Thunberg's verdict on the COP climate summit process

**What distinguishes Perrottet is the fervour of his devotion... Perrottet is the whole neoliberal package.**

Journalist Mike Secombe on new NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet

**Massive trouble everywhere**

Alan Jones, right wing media pundit, on the Liberal Party vote collapse, trying to wake up Scott Morrison to an electoral disaster

**The weakest part of our response we've found constantly to be health literacy, access to testing and vaccines, casualised workforces.**

Prof Mark Stooze of the Burnet Institute on where COVID has had the heaviest impact

**Every State and Territory has a crisis with its public hospitals**

AMA President Dr Omar Khorshid points out hospital funding problems date from before COVID

# CONTENTS

## ISSUE 153 OCT-NOV 2021



### Morrison's climate fraud

**7** Net Zero and Morrison's climate failure

**16** Why COP26 summit won't save the climate



### COVID and vaccine mandates

**5** Editorial

**8** 'Don't scab get the job'—a slogan no unionist should use

**9** Vilifying CFMEU protesters will help the right



**16** AUKUS and 'Australian sovereignty'—  
Why Australia's rulers back the US

### Australia

**10** USyd concedes transition leave

**10** Sydney rail workers strike for jobs and safety

**20** Australia abandons refugees in PNG

### Obituary

**10** Alana Bowden

29.01.1986 - 03.10.21



### International

**11** Evergrande woes show China's economic instability

**12** Protests begin against Texas abortion ban



### Reviews

**13** *Escape from Manus*

### Features

**18** Why the right hates Critical Race Theory

## Sexist judge shows sympathy for Knox old boy

A DISTRICT Court judge in NSW has drawn outrage after he overturned a conviction against a Knox Grammar old boy who punched a woman in the face.

In sympathy unlikely to be extended to someone without the silk representing the 20-year-old, the judge remarked that, “the situation... had arisen against a particularly unhappy and unfortunate 2020.” He had broken up with his girlfriend, his father had been sick, he had dropped out of university, and, to top it all off, his dog had died.

Besides, the judge thought, it was the woman’s fault: her dress “might have been perceived by a 20-year-old former student from Knox to be provocative”.

Earlier in the night Nicholas Drummond had abused the woman, who he had never met, calling her a “slut”. Later she approached him and took a photo, something the judge for some reason called “provocative”. He tried to grab her phone, and was thrown out of the pub when this became a tug-of-war.

On the way he punched another bystander, and when the woman followed him, he punched her to the ground, stamping on and destroying her phone.

The judge allowed no conviction to be recorded, telling him to “thank your lucky stars, and keep your nose clean, young man, and good luck with the coaching when you are allowed to get back to it”.

## Casuals first on the firing line in pandemic

CASUAL WORKERS were more than eight times more likely to lose work than permanent staff when COVID hit. That’s the conclusion of a new report from the Centre for Future Work. Casual jobs were 72 per cent of those lost between last May and August. It also found that casuals are not being compensated for the insecure nature of their work, earning 26 per cent less than permanent staff in median hourly wages.

Part-time workers, both casual and permanent, were also 4.5 times more likely to lose their job than full-time workers.

## Police brutality sees more Indigenous deaths in custody



SHOCKING DETAILS of further Indigenous deaths in custody have emerged over recent weeks.

One police officer is on trial for murder after he shot and killed Indigenous woman Joyce Clarke in Geraldton, WA in 2019. Clarke was in deep distress, having threatened suicide days before, and was walking a suburban street carrying a knife. Two other officers faced her at a distance, one with an unactivated taser and another unarmed, trying to talk her down. But the third officer got out of his car and immediately pointed a gun at her. In less than 13 seconds he had shot her dead.

A few weeks earlier in Perth, another cop fronted an inquest into the death of Noongar-Yamatji woman Ms Wynne, who also died in 2019. He admitted to pushing her onto her stomach and keeping his knee on her back for up to two minutes while she was handcuffed. When police pulled Ms Wynne up, she had lost consciousness, and died five days later. Ms Wynne had reportedly suffered a severe mental health episode.

Meanwhile, the body of Gordon Copeland, who disappeared while running away from police three months ago, has been found just 500 metres from where he was last seen jumping into a river.

Five days after he disappeared, police scaled down search efforts. Gordon’s family spent over \$8000 on boats, GoPros, food and fuel to continue searching for him. Almost every day they continued looking for him. Once this finally happened, a body was found the day after the search resumed.

Finally, another 27-year-old Indigenous man died in Toowoomba in early October, after a “violent struggle” with police, who say he and two others were found in a stolen vehicle.

## Number in youth detention back at record high in NT

THE NUMBER of youth detainees in the NT recently reached the equal-highest in several years, following changes to youth bail laws passed in May.

Since then 64 young people have entered detention for the first time, with a high point of 53 inmates at one time. The new laws contain a presumption against bail for more offences, and automatic reversal of bail for breaches of conditions or new offences. “Within the first few weeks of the legislation being passed, we were seeing much-younger kids and much-younger kids in court for the first time,” Central Australian Youth Justice Network’s Kirsten Wilson said.

The bail laws directly contradict the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the abuse of Aboriginal children in NT prisons begun after the Don Dale scandal in 2016.

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

## Climate change adding to workplace health and safety risks

CLIMATE CHANGE is a growing workplace risk and can lead to accidents and even death, a new report written by researchers at the UTS Climate Justice Research Centre argues.

Researchers interviewed United Workers Union (UWU) members working in jobs as varied as teacher’s aides, machine operators, warehouse workers, cleaners, horticulturalists, chefs, early childhood educators, paramedics, security and custodial workers.

Many reported that existing cooling controls in their workplaces do not work properly, are broken, are ineffective in high temperatures, or are available only for customers and not staff.

Shockingly, some workers had experienced or witnessed a range of serious incidents at work, including passing out, seizures, stress, hospitalisation and death.

The report shows management dragging their feet over the issue, putting profits before health. The researchers report: “In workplaces that have heat policies, some members say it is impossible to get management to act in accordance with them.”

But current industrial laws make it difficult for unions to take up climate change issues in enterprise agreements.

Fighting climate change is already union business—including campaigning for a rapid transition to 100 per cent publicly owned renewable energy with guaranteed jobs for displaced fossil fuel workers.

But this report is a reminder that climate change affects us at work. Unions need to mobilise for solutions to heat stress on the job and fight for the right to strike to win and implement those measures.

# EDITORIAL

## Fight to fund hospitals, safety and jobs amid COVID reopening

WITH OVER 75 per cent of the population fully vaccinated, NSW has begun easing COVID restrictions, with Victoria to follow in late October.

The end of the discriminatory lockdown of Western Sydney is more than welcome. Public health orders became an excuse for racist policing. In July and August more than 28,000 COVID fines were issued—about 13 times the number issued during the whole of 2020.

In Victoria, unnecessary curfews are still in place, and police prevented a protest picnic in support of refugees, although Dan Andrews is allowing 10,000 fully vaccinated people to attend the Melbourne Cup.

NSW will reach 90 per cent double vaccination by November. But Scott Morrison's failures mean groups that were supposed to be have the highest priority including Indigenous people and people with disabilities remain at risk.

Vaccination in Indigenous communities remains a scandal. In mid-October only 58 per cent of Indigenous people aged over 16 in NSW were double vaccinated, compared to the state average of 75 per cent. Nationwide just 40 per cent of Indigenous people are fully vaccinated.

In disability group homes, supposedly the same priority as aged care centres, only 68.7 per cent are fully vaccinated.

Instead of expanding access and providing the education and persuasion needed, state governments are increasingly relying on authoritarian vaccine mandates.

But threatening workers with the sack if they aren't vaccinated risks hardening people in their opposition—and driving them into the arms of anti-vaxxers and the far right.

Too much of the left and the union movement has fallen for the idea that anyone who is vaccine hesitant is a fascist or a scab. This can only divide workers and weaken the unions.

Governments, state and federal, are blaming unvaccinated people to cover up their failures to roll-out vaccines or take measures to make workplaces safe. Although the NSW government has had months to prepare schools for re-opening, it has belatedly ordered just 10,000 air purifiers, although there are over 2200 government schools, with many more than five classrooms each. Victoria has ordered 51,000.

It's also clear that hospital funding must be massively boosted. In



**Above: StarTrack delivery workers, who have been essential throughout the pandemic, are fighting for job security**

Queensland, even without any COVID outbreak, hospitals are already operating at 100 per cent capacity.

Morrison has rejected state governments' demands for more funds as a "political shakedown".

Even though real rates of unemployment are rising, and the economy is stalling, Morrison is ripping away financial assistance for those thrown out of work through lockdowns.

After states hit 80 per cent vaccination, payments will drop back to the rate of JobSeeker in the second week, pushing more people into poverty. In NSW this will happen within three weeks of lockdown ending. There will be no support after 80 per cent if any state imposes new restrictions.

Yet Morrison is spending tens of billions on nuclear submarines and other military hardware. Another \$1.3 billion for new US-made Seahawk helicopters has just been announced.

That money should be used to fund hospitals, safety measures and an increase to JobSeeker. But Labor has adopted a small-target approach to the coming federal election, saying it supports the nuclear submarines and the Liberals' tax cuts for the rich.

Opinion polls are showing Labor ahead of the Liberals 53-47, but real struggle will be needed to get rid of Morrison and win real change.

### Fightback needed

Most unions responded to COVID by declaring we were "all in it together", putting any fight against the government on hold and suspending strikes.

But inequality and class divisions have fuelled the crisis—from the casual

workers unable to take sick leave to the essential workers in Melbourne and Sydney's working class areas catching the virus at work.

In Melbourne, data for the most recent outbreak shows the most disadvantaged areas have experienced ten times more cases than the most affluent.

Reopening must not mean a return to business as usual.

As restrictions lift workers need to go on the offensive. Unions at Sydney and NSW trains staged a four-hour strike on 28 September and are preparing for further action. Teachers and nurses in NSW are preparing for strikes. Victorian teachers have also voted for industrial action.

Patrick's workers across the country have taken strike action. Truck drivers at StarTrack, FedEx and Linfox are threatening co-ordinated strikes to fight casualisation and outsourcing. Cadbury workers in Melbourne have also gone to strike to demand permanent jobs.

Serious strike action is the way to fight for secure jobs, decent pay rises, and improved safety and conditions.

With Morrison refusing to adopt serious targets and pouring money into his "gas-fired recovery", the rallies on 6 November around the COP26 climate summit need to be the start of concerted action by the climate movement.

The COVID crisis has starkly revealed the conflict between profit and human life. The climate crisis is also driven by capitalism's contempt for people and planet. We need to build the struggles for workers' rights and climate action and fight for a better world.

.....  
**Morrison has rejected state government pleas for more hospital funding as a 'political shakedown'.**

By Dani Cotton

## University of Sydney concedes gender transition leave

THE NATIONAL Tertiary Education Union has won 30 days of paid gender transition leave at the University of Sydney (USyd), setting an industry-leading standard.

This is an important win for transgender and gender diverse workers. They can now access leave while undergoing social transition, such as changing names, pronouns and presentation, or coming out at work, or while they access transgender medical care such as hormone therapy or surgeries.

Stuart Andrews, executive director of management's "union", the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association, originally dismissed gender affirmation leave as an ambit claim, calling it "way beyond community norms" and a "great frustration".

One USyd associate professor called gender transition "one of life's many challenges", arguing that forms of leave for gender transition or domestic violence were not "equitable".

However, unionists should see "equity" as about addressing social inequalities in the workplace. Forcing oppressed groups to draw down their sick leave or personal leave simply enforces inequities.

Fighting for the right to transition is an important way to combat systemic transphobia. Social oppression can be particularly concentrated during the time of "transition".

Transitioning can sometimes mean strained personal relationships, high medical costs, losing secure employment and housing or dropping out of formal employment altogether. And all of this deepens oppression and shame.

It is extremely politically significant when the union movement stands for trans rights. A transphobic system in NSW still requires trans people to get genital surgeries before they change their recorded birth certificate gender.

Liberal MPs are lining up to support Mark Latham's transphobic "parental rights bill" to entrench transphobia further. On many university campuses, transphobic feminists have joined the anti-trans backlash enthusiastically.

The campaign continues at USyd, where management are holding out on annualised gender transition leave, proposing instead a "one-off bank". This perpetuates the idea that transition is a one-time binary transformation neatly tied off after six weeks of surgery and recovery.

Such a rich institution can easily afford to support the small number of people likely to use the leave.



**Above: NTEU members in Sydney at Mardi Gras march this year**

More than 200 people have signed a petition backing the original demand. An open fight against transphobic ideas at work is key. Even at a place like USyd, the weight of transphobia can pressure people to keep

transitioning a secret. The same people pinching pennies on trans leave are the ones busy cutting jobs and slashing courses. Trans rights are workers' rights and transitioning should be a right at every workplace.

## Strike for jobs and safety shuts down Sydney trains

WORKERS ON Sydney's trains took a four hour strike on 28 September, bringing the rail system to a halt. It was the culmination of a month of bans on overtime, go slows and work to rule. Further action is likely.

Around 100 staff walked off the job together at Central station. Up to 700 workers from Sydney Trains and NSW Trains also joined a digital picket line and online meeting organised by the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU).

Management is looking to gut conditions, including clauses that protect workers against contracting out and privatisation of parts of the service.

Another key issue is safety and staffing on the 55 New Intercity Fleet (NIF) trains, which will carry passengers between Sydney and the Central Coast, Newcastle, Wollongong and the Blue Mountains. The government wants drivers to use new CCTV technology to monitor boarding at stations, rather than guards.

"The safest way [to run the trains] is with a guard and station staff, that allows drivers to focus on their main role," Dan Leece, President of the union's locomotive division and an intercity train driver, told the meeting.

The government sees the new trains as "the transition to driver only operations" he added, and a way to cut jobs. The new trains were meant to be operating two years ago but a union

ban has seen this continually delayed.

Management has offered just a 0.3 per cent pay rise next year, far below the NSW government's public sector wage cap of 1.5 per cent, and 2.5 per cent in following years. Last year public sector workers, including trains staff, received the same insulting 0.3 per cent as a result of the NSW government's effort to freeze wages during COVID.

ACTU President Michele O'Neil pointed out that train staff are among the workers during the COVID crisis who, "had to keep turning up and do an essential job, and take risks with your and your family's health to keep essential services open."

Yet in return workers are now being treated with contempt by management and the state government.

"We're not going to stand by and watch this government disrespect our workforce, compromise safety on our network, cut our cleaners' jobs and bring in contractors," Alex Claassens told the meeting. "We're going to fight them every step of the way."

Three years ago Sydney train drivers were banned from taking strike action under anti-strike laws, because of the potential impact of action. Escalating strikes, including the kind of 24-hour stoppages the union backed away from after that ban, will be necessary to win.

.....  
**Social oppression can be particularly concentrated during the time of 'transition'**

# Morrison among worst in world in climate failure

By James Supple

SCOTT MORRISON had to be shamed into even attending the COP26 summit in Glasgow.

He is clearly anxious to avoid further humiliation on the global stage.

At the last summit in 2019, Morrison stayed home but ordered officials to block with Donald Trump and Brazil's hard right leader Jair Bolsonaro to undermine action. Australia was accused of cheating for insisting on the use of Kyoto carry-over credits to meet its target for emissions reduction.

That summit took place while Australia was literally on fire with 2019's record bushfires.

This year parts of the Western US and Canada have seen the same apocalyptic events, as unprecedented heat fuelled fires for the second year running.

Morrison is again isolated globally as he refuses to adopt even the semblance of a serious climate policy. Just weeks from the summit, he is still unable to bring himself to adopt even the useless net zero by 2050 target.

Most world leaders adopted net zero by 2050 long ago. There is a good reason for this—it commits them to practically nothing.

No political leader of today is going to be around in 30 years when the target has to be delivered. It allows them to get away with much more modest actions in the here and now, while pretending they are part of a “pathway” to zero emissions.

The fact that Rupert Murdoch's media empire, which has spent years promoting climate denial, is now campaigning in support of the target speaks volumes.

Although both Morrison and Treasurer Josh Frydenberg have made noises in its support, the Coalition is having serious trouble getting the Nationals to agree.

National MPs, including Resources Minister Keith Pitt, are demanding more funding for fossil fuels, calling for \$250 billion in loan guarantees for mining projects as a condition of their support.

This is their answer to the fact even the banks no longer see coal mines as a good investment.

Far more important are immediate climate policies, and targets for 2030. Here Morrison is still hanging on to



**Above: Students at the Climate Strike in May** Photo: Matt Hrkac

Tony Abbott's useless target of 26-28 per cent emissions reduction. And an assessment by Climate Action Tracker shows that Australia will not even meet this target.

Australia needs to deliver closer to 75 per cent emissions cuts, according to the Climate Council, to keep heating lower than 2 degrees. The safe limit for warming nominated at the Paris summit of 1.5 degrees is now almost certain to be passed.

Cuts of 50 per cent could be achieved with very little effort. The NSW Liberal government recently adopted a 50 per cent target for 2030, with at least three coal power plants scheduled to close by then, and plans to encourage electric vehicles. Victoria and SA have similar targets.

## Locking in future for fossil fuels

Morrison is using the fig-leaf of his “New Technology Roadmap” as a cover for inaction. This talks of developing new technologies to reduce emissions, while Morrison refuses to do anything to implement the technologies that already exist.

Instead his technology push is aimed at ensuring a future for fossil fuels.

Hydrogen, a clean energy source, would be produced using gas, meaning more carbon emissions, instead of developing green hydrogen using renewable energy. Alongside this the government is pouring another \$260 million into carbon capture and stor-

age, the failed technology promoted by the fossil fuel industry to bury emissions underground, and allow them to carry on polluting.

The Coalition is also continuing to fund its “gas-fuelled recovery”. This month it announced \$30 million for another new gas plant at Port Kembla, on top of \$600 million in spending on a new gas plant at Kurri Kurri.

And it is supporting new coal and gas mines up and down the country.

It wants to open up new gas fields with \$50 million in funding for NT's Beetaloo Basin and \$20.7 million for Queensland's North Bowen and Galilee Basins. And it has approved three new coal mine developments in the last month.

The fossil fuel companies want to carry on profiting from pollution as long as possible. But it is workers who will be left behind when the industry declines. Government funding should be going into the just transition needed, through ensuring workers well-paid jobs with good conditions in new clean industries.

The last two years have seen the climate movement in retreat, as COVID pushed climate change off the political agenda following the magnificent Climate Strikes in 2019. While all eyes focused on the COP26 summit, the climate movement needs to mobilise to put the spotlight back on Morrison's fossil fuel expansion, and build the pressure to kick him out and force the urgent action on climate we need.

**Morrison is supporting new coal and gas mines up and down the country**

# ‘Don’t scab, get the job’—a slogan no unionist should use

By Ian Rintoul and James Supple

UNIONS HAVE rightly been encouraging members to get vaccinated. But the idea that people unsure about getting a job are all “anti-union” or “scabs” is wrong. The slogan “Don’t scab, get the job” can only create divisions among workers while at the same time downplaying the seriousness of scabbing.

For unionists, scabs are the lowest form of life. They kow-tow to the bosses; they break strikes; they break the solidarity that workers need to fight the boss.

The people who took wharfies’ jobs in 1998 when Chris Corrigan and the Liberal government tried to break the maritime union, for example, were scabs.

There is no comparison between workers who will help the boss break a strike and people who are worried about the vaccine. There are good unionists who are, wrongly, worried about the COVID vaccine.

The vast majority of those concerned about vaccination are not hard anti-vaxxers or fascists—they can be won over. Melbourne Institute polling shows the number of those not willing to be vaccinated or not sure fell from 35 per cent in May to 15 per cent in late September.

It makes a huge difference if unions are pro-active building confidence among their members, rather than letting the bosses and governments mandate vaccination.

The Health Services Union in NSW, for instance, held an online forum with 500 members to deal with concerns and turned around 30 per cent of those who were hesitant in one sitting.

Calling those with concerns scabs and implying that they are strike-breakers who are not wanted in the union will only worsen existing divisions, weaken the unions and push people closer to the far right and the anti-vaxxers. Abusing someone who is vaccine-hesitant does nothing to convince them to get vaccinated—just the opposite.

## Policy

The government is using mandatory vaccination to cover its own failures to roll out the vaccine much earlier and to properly resource hospitals. Just as it has done throughout the COVID crisis, it is trying to shift the



**Above: Education and persuasion are key to driving up rates of vaccination**

blame onto individuals.

For months there has been inadequate supply of vaccines as a result of Morrison’s failures. And getting jabbed is still far more complicated than it should be. People working full-time have been forced to organise appointments in their own time. Workers should get paid time off to attend appointments.

Many unions still do not accept mandatory vaccination. Even the Victorian branch of the CFMEU says it does not support it.

The Queensland building trades (CFMEU, the Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the plumbers’ union) said on 18 August:

“We strongly oppose any coercive ‘no job-no job’ restrictions for construction workers,” and declared that “punitive measures that create two classes of citizens is not a path out of this pandemic”.

In early September, CFMEU NSW secretary Darren Greenfield said the union would fight mandatory jobs, which are required for construction workers to leave Sydney council areas with the highest COVID cases.

The secretary of the Victorian Health Workers Union, Diana Asmar, told the *Herald Sun*: “HWU members that are not wanting to get the vaccine are not ‘anti-vaxxers’ but rather have concerns about the implications of the vaccine on their personal health.”

The Victorian secretary of the Rail Tram and Bus Union, Luba Grigovich says: “Mandatory vaccination

breaks down trust and dialogue and results in greater hesitancy. Workers must be trusted to make their own good decisions and be provided with opportunity and access to medical advice, education campaigns and easy to access vaccines, which still remain to be seen.”

## Mandate

The Victorian Building Industry Group of Unions also issued a statement on the night after the protests at the CMFEU office, saying: “We maintain the view that the construction industry would have voluntarily reached high levels of vaccination without a heavy-handed approach.

“This heavy-handed mandate by the Chief Health Officer, which was implemented with no notice, has only served to drive many people towards the anti-vax movement.”

They are right—vaccine mandates put a gun to workers’ heads by threatening their jobs and will generate resentment and anger, making it harder to convince anyone who is hesitant.

But CFMEU members who voiced the same concerns, and asked what would be done to defend those who faced losing their job, are now being forced out of the union and out of a job.

More unions are going to face the same dilemma.

It is not enough to oppose “no job, no job” in words; when mandatory vaccination is being used to sack workers, unions must defend those jobs.

.....  
**The vast majority of those concerned about vaccination are not anti-vaxxers or fascists**

# Vilifying CFMEU protesters will only build the right

By Ian Rintoul

THE LEADERSHIP of the Victorian CFMEU and the ACTU, along with most of the left, have condemned the protesters at the Victorian CFMEU office as everything from “drunken morons” to “right-wing extremists” and “neo-Nazis”.

It is very clear that while there were organised anti-vaxxers and elements of the far right involved, there were also hundreds of CFMEU members at the protest.

Feelings were running high over a series of issues in construction—from lost shifts due to the lockdown, the ban on smoko sheds, and then an announcement that jobs were on the line with a deadline for mandatory COVID jobs.

Workers wanted answers. But they got no answers from their union.

The next day a number of construction workers joined another large protest. As the ABC’s Norman Hermant reported, “What started with large numbers of angry construction workers has been largely subsumed by anti-vaccination and anti-lockdown activists.”

It shows the potential for the far right to grow out of working class discontent and disillusionment.

Therein lies the danger of wrongly labelling and dismissing all of the protesters as anti-vaxxers or anti-union. Such an attitude can only result in more people being pushed into the arms of the organised right.

Surveys by large Melbourne building companies before the protests found the number of actual anti-vaxxers was tiny, with just 1 per cent resisting vaccination and another 11 per cent “still considering the issue”.

There has been enormous confusion and misinformation around COVID vaccines. This was fuelled by Scott Morrison’s continual changes to advice about who should get the AstraZeneca vaccine, which fed the idea it was unsafe.

Migrant and marginalised communities have higher levels of vaccine hesitancy due to experiences of racism and less access to health-care, and greater levels of mistrust in authorities. Some people are wrongly concerned that they might be more susceptible to adverse reactions.

Yet Victorian Secretary of the CFMEU, John Setka, has publicly threatened the jobs of CFMEU mem-



**Above: Construction workers and union members at the protest outside the CFMEU Melbourne office**

bers at the protest.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus has similarly dismissed the Monday protest as being “orchestrated by violent right-wing extremists and anti-vaccination activists”.

McManus told 3AW that ultimately people who refuse to be vaccinated will be sacked. “Employers have to follow public health orders.” She had nothing to say to the workers who face losing their jobs.

This “do-nothing” attitude will make the unions weaker and give the far right more of a hearing.

Workers join unions to protect their jobs and conditions. When the unions refuse to protect them it should not be surprising if they turn to others who falsely claim to support them.

Even if it is only 5 per cent of the 30,000 workers in the Victorian CFMEU who are ultimately vaccine-hesitant, that is 1500 workers who will lose their jobs, and hundreds of others who will be disillusioned in a union that failed to defend them.

**To isolate the far right, unions have to fight against the conditions—like insecure work and unemployment—that allow them to grow**

## Fighting for workers left behind

To isolate the anti-vaxxers and the far right, unions and the left have to fight against the conditions—like insecure work and unemployment—that allow them to grow.

It is workers and the marginalised that have paid the price of lockdowns. Working class areas of Melbourne and Sydney have suffered the highest COVID cases and the worst of racism and police repression.

Last year migrant communities in

public housing towers in Melbourne had discriminatory hard lockdown conditions imposed.

Melbourne has spent longer in lockdown than any other city in the world. Construction workers, among others, have lost large amounts of income.

As McManus admitted in the aftermath of the CFMEU protest, “The reality for many people’s lives is economic devastation and deep social dislocation.”

John Setka told ABC TV, “We as a union would like to protest about certain things, but we haven’t been able to since the pandemic started. You have got to give up a few things.” The sad fact is that through the pandemic Setka and McManus have given up on fighting back.

That lack of struggle has allowed the far right to get a hearing.

Essential workers have been shown to be vital to keeping society going. This gives them enormous power to fight insecure work, increase wages, and to demand adequate safety.

As the examples of workplace safety stoppages show, bosses and government can be forced to capitulate within days.

Taking a stand to defend the jobs of anyone threatened by mandatory vaccinations is a good place to start the fight to make sure no one is left behind by the COVID crisis.

;Rather than threatening the jobs of construction workers, John Setka and the CFMEU should be defending them.

# Vale Alana Bowden—A revolutionary who burned brightly and died too young

29.01.1986–03.10.2021

Alana Louise Bowden, our dear friend and comrade, died on 3 October in Noosa. A 35-year-old vivacious activist, her death is a devastating loss that has shaken her community and her many friends.

In a relatively short space of time this year, Alana emerged as a leader and champion of the Save the Arts campaign at the University of Sydney. After winning the university medal for her honours thesis, Alana was working casually across the departments of Theatre and Performance Studies and Studies in Religion, taking a year before she started her PhD there. When management’s “Operation Bluestar” threatened cuts and amalgamations to both her departments, Alana regarded this as a “sign from the universe” that she should take a leading role.

After seven long months of struggle, the campaign had an enormous win, with the departments saved and no ongoing job cuts. Alana was incredibly satisfied with the win and was determined to stop every last cut. Her tireless work, together with staff, students and the NTEU, helped save the departments at a moment when cuts and job losses had been the status quo. And it was Alana, full of poetry and vigour, megaphone in hand, who led the charge and inspired others to follow.

Alana was uncompromisingly furious at the Dean’s suggestion that the protests could be dismissed as “hermeneutically suspicious” and “insinuatingly gendered”, and overjoyed at students invading her zoom classes to call out the Dean’s “girlboss feminism”.

In an environment where too many have been demoralised by defeats and accommodated themselves to a decaying system, Alana’s passion shone through as joyful and authentic. She believed in the arts and the value of critical education and carried righteous anger at a Liberal government determined to attack it.

It is deeply tragic that the fruits of this win will only be enjoyed by those who follow her, and that Alana’s talents will not have a chance to continue to flower. Her interests lay in the arts, theatre, film, esotericism, witchcraft, religion, magic, paganism, sexuality and secular rituals. She wanted to marry these areas of study into a cohesive framework, helping to understand the beauty of the world and to inspire the fight for a better one. We are lucky that colleagues plan to posthumously



**Above: Alana at the Save USyd Arts rally at Sydney Uni in June**

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**‘We have breached the citadel. And so, as I see it, the opportunities of this moment are many’ —Alana in her Honi Soit article ‘Poets inside the Republic: The power and protest of the arts’**

publish some of her writings.

Alana was a burgeoning socialist. She was a regular at Solidarity meetings, conferences and reading groups in Sydney this past year, and brought along her genuine and kooky personality everywhere she went.

She had an infectious passion for the Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai, and brought many comrades new and old to Kollontai’s work. It would be a fitting memory to Alana for others to explore some of Kollontai’s writing, from the *Social Basis of the Woman Question*, to Kollontai’s novel *Red Love*, or the A.K. 47 podcast.

Alana was a staunch feminist. We shared with Alana a vision for women’s liberation and for an anti-capitalist struggle that could smash apart sexism, the nuclear family, and start building a new world. This vision was driven by Alana’s compassionate nature and her belief that the best way to respond to an unjust world is with radical love.

The generous, poetic and loving energy that she brought to our group was a gift that will not be forgotten. And nor will we forget her love for the leftist Welsh punk-rock band, The Manic Street Preachers.

During the month of September, Alana endured two weeks of hotel quarantine in Brisbane and then lived in Noosa along with her brother Tom to attend to her mother Louise, who is very sick with cancer. Whilst there Alana suffered what at this stage seems like a sudden medical event that rendered her unconscious, and from which

she was unable to be revived.

Our thoughts are with her platonic life partner Brett Brown and the Bowden-Brown family. Our hearts go out to her mother Louise who Alana took so much of her quick-wittedness and humour from, her little brother Tom, her father Steve, her sister-in-law Laura and to her beloved dog Bacchus. To her many colleagues, her supervisors, friends, her students and indeed the entire University of Sydney community, our thoughts are with you. To the Booze Hounds dog park group in Surry Hills and all of Bacchus’ dog friends, we send our love. Alana touched so many.

A public memorial for Alana, including compulsory leopard print for attendees, is at this stage being planned for January 2022 to celebrate her life, with live music, ritual and performance, alongside a ceremonial tree planting in her honour. A scholarship in her name is also being planned.

It is perhaps a little inadequate to talk about Alana in the past tense. She lives on in the continuing fight for a better world, and of course on the campus of the University of Sydney where hope blossoms.

In her last public article, celebrating the defence of departments at USyd, Alana wrote “we have breached the citadel. And so, as I see it, the opportunities of this moment are many.”

It is with hope and sadness that we take up Alana’s mantle and continue the fight. Rest in power, comrade.  
**Matte Rochford and Dani Cotton on behalf of Solidarity**

# Evergrande crisis shows Chinese growth figures built on sand

By Feiyi Zhang

THE LOOMING potential default of the Chinese property giant Evergrande is sending shivers down the spines of capitalists across the world.

Decades of growth in the Chinese economy have seemingly continued with no end in sight. But the potential collapse of the second largest property developer in China reveals inherent instabilities in the Chinese economy, which is now the second largest in the world.

The Evergrande crisis is a major thorn in the side of President Xi Jinping's government, which has been on a warpath to clean up the excesses of Chinese capitalism.

While Evergrande Group chair Hui Ka Yan has an estimated \$US11.8 billion fortune, 1.6 million people stand to lose homes they have already begun paying for. Evergrande bosses also convinced 70,000 staff members to lend money to the company. People, including staff members, have been protesting outside Evergrande offices across China.

The Chinese government managed a dip in its growth during the 2008 global economic crisis by pumping money into the economy, lowering interest rates and launching massive state infrastructure programs. Like in Australia, these measures led to a boom in residential real estate.

According to Goldman Sachs, the total value of Chinese homes and developers' inventory hit \$US52 trillion in 2019, twice the size of the US residential market. Many economists say that the current boom eclipses that of the US housing bubble in the 2000s which precipitated the 2008 global crisis.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, at the peak of the US property boom, about \$US900 billion a year was being invested in residential real estate. In the 12 months to June, about \$US1.4 trillion was invested in Chinese housing. More was invested last month in Chinese real estate than in any other month on record.

## Speculative

Marxist economist Michael Roberts points out that Evergrande's debt of \$US300 billion should be compared to total credit outstanding in China of \$50 trillion, that is, not very large. However, it shows how China's official annual growth numbers have been



**Above: China's construction boom has been fed by speculative investment**

fuelled by speculative investment.

Roberts argues that with sectors such as manufacturing and hi-tech communications growing more slowly, the real estate boom allowed authorities to claim real GDP growth of 6-8 per cent a year.

The collapse of the US housing bubble in 2008 is a clear warning of the dangers of speculation in a highly indebted economy with low growth in productive sectors of the economy.

Karl Marx's understanding of economics is central to understanding the unstable boom and bust cycle of capitalism.

Marx argued that the very nature of economic booms leads to busts. Capitalists are motivated by making higher profits. During a boom they throw increasing amounts of money at investment. But in the process the rate of profit (their return on investment) decreases.

This is because the underlying source of value is human labour time. Each capitalist invests in the latest machinery and technology to grab a bigger market share and more profits. Once every capitalist has caught up, the amount of labour used in production shrinks proportionately and the rate of profit declines.

Governments across the world, including China's, have responded in recent years by launching monetary stimulus, pumping billions of dollars into the economy.

However, Marx also outlined the highly contradictory nature of the boom and bust cycle. Economic crisis

bankrupts the weakest companies, reducing the high rates of machinery and technology relative to labour and clearing the way for a new cycle of boom.

## Merge

But as Marx pointed out, corporations tend to merge or swallow up smaller companies to try to mitigate declining profit rates. Since the major global economic crisis in the 1970s, governments have been reluctant to allow corporations to fail because they have become so large that their collapse would have a major impact on economies. The result is slower growth.

This has led to debates about whether governments should step in to save companies on the verge of collapse. The Chinese government has been unwilling so far to save Evergrande, with the possibility looming of the company being formally declared in default as we go to press.

The government will likely assist in some form this time but the inherent instabilities in the Chinese economy and global capitalism persist. Meanwhile, Xi Jinping's government is cracking down on the "disorderly expansion of capital", putting on trial—and even to death—wealthy elites in an attempt to improve the image of Chinese capitalism and be seen to deal with corruption, particularly among government officials.

A critical question for the Chinese working class will be the strength and growth of the workers' movement and its ability to defend jobs and homes.

.....  
**Many economists say that the Chinese boom eclipses the US housing bubble which precipitated the 2008 global crisis**

# US cities march against Texas abortion ban

By Virginia Rodino and  
Clare Lemlich Marx21 US

ON SATURDAY 2 October hundreds of reproductive rights rallies took place across the US. The latest protests, part of the fifth Women's March, came one month after Texas's near-total ban on abortions went into effect.

The new law, commonly known as the "heartbeat law," prohibits abortions after six weeks into a pregnancy—before most people know they are pregnant. It is also earlier than when 85 to 90 per cent of all abortions are carried out.

There are no exceptions for rape or incest—and the law also allows anyone to sue patients, medical workers, or even a patient's family or friends who "aid and abet" an abortion.

The law relies on ordinary people to enforce the ban, awarding them at least \$10,000 if they successfully sue anyone who helped provide an illegal abortion. For instance, drivers who bring people to clinics or anti-choice protesters outside clinics can report suspected abortions and be rewarded for it.

A similar bill to ban most abortions after six weeks has also been introduced in Florida.

Major marches took place in Washington, DC, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, as well as in several Texas cities.

In Austin, Texas, hundreds gathered. Thousands filled streets in downtown Dallas for a "Reproductive Liberation March and Rally" led by women of colour.

The largest demonstration was in Washington, DC, where protesters marched to the Supreme Court two days before it reconvened for a session in which the justices will consider a Mississippi case that could enable them to overturn federal abortion rights established in the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* case.

If the court overturns the precedent, abortion access would no longer be protected by the Constitution, leaving states free to ban it, limit it, or allow it without restrictions. Many states already have laws to ban all or nearly all abortions that would be triggered if *Roe* were overturned, and abortion rights would not be protected in over half the 50 states.

The day before the marches, the



**Above: Protest against the Texas abortion ban in the US**

Biden administration urged a federal judge to block the Texas law while a legal challenge works its way through the courts. The judge issued a temporary pause, but a higher court quickly overruled this.

The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, has already denied a similar request. In response, for the first time ever, approval ratings for the Supreme Court dipped below 50 per cent. The full hearing will be one of a series of cases that will test whether the US Supreme Court will uphold or overrule *Roe v. Wade*. A strong movement in the streets could force them to recognise the country's pro-choice majority.

## Democrats

The first Women's March was held in 2017 on the day after President Donald Trump's inauguration. But the October marches were not as well-attended.

Called by a liberal coalition of pro-Democrat organisations, the message at most demonstrations around the country was to vote Democrat. Nine months into a Democratic presidency and with abortion rights still under siege, it's little wonder that fewer people turned out.

The Biden Administration is not supportive of the restrictive laws. But the Democrats are fair-weather friends when it comes to abortion—Biden himself originally opposed *Roe v. Wade*. He has voted throughout his career against federal funding for

abortions. But popular opinion and movements for reproductive justice have pushed Biden to back *Roe*. We need movements today that can make the Democrats' long time flip-flopping on abortion politically untenable.

## Strategy

Just a few years ago overturning *Roe* seemed impossible. Now it is a real possibility. There is a palpable rage against the Texas ban and people know it is a prelude to more attacks.

The general de-mobilisation around the election, coupled with the feeling that we are waiting for the Biden administration, or progressives in Congress, to act, have undermined building a movement that could actually pressure the Supreme Court to affirm abortion rights.

In the immediate days following the Texas ban announcement, it wasn't clear if the mainstream women's organisations were going to call anything in response.

In this context, the October protests were an encouraging sign. For all the limitations of the Women's Marches, they are attracting a new layer of people who want to defend abortion.

The way *Roe* was won, and the way to defend it, is to build a huge movement that threatens the legitimacy of an anti-choice court. There needs to be a socialist pole inside these marches—and open, democratic meetings to plan them—to raise these arguments and demands.

.....  
**A strong movement in the streets could force the Supreme Court to recognise the country's pro-choice majority**

## Australia's refugee cruelty exposed by one man's daring escape

**Escape from Manus**  
by Jaivet Ealom  
Penguin, \$34.99

*ESCAPE FROM Manus* is an incredible story of determination, cunning and sheer luck that tears apart the Coalition's lies about refugees. It is a book you can't put down and one I suspect that will eventually be made into a film.

It starts with Ealom's persecution in Myanmar, where Rohingya are not recognised as citizens. He falsified documents to study at Dagon University but without a national ID he could not graduate. He was taken on illegally as an industrial chemist intern but when that ended he had nowhere to go.

Meanwhile the regime had launched mass slaughter of Rohingya in the Arakan province, which saw his parents flee to the jungle. In danger, he is put in touch with Khaled, a Rohingya man who has fled to Indonesia, where a passport is not needed for travel. Ealom seeks to join him. He writes: "I took the first step. And just like that, I became a refugee."

Ealom explains why the slur of "economic migrants" is so mistaken. "I had never met an economic migrant in detention. Most detainees had abandoned careers and all their worldly possessions, and fled rather than face imprisonment or death. By trying to reach Australia they were looking at life at a much lower socio-economic level than they had once known. That's the opposite of an economic migrant."

He also describes the pressures that led refugees to flee Indonesia by boat. "Refugees were forbidden from studying, working or even opening a bank account in Indonesia—on pain of imprisonment ...



a few years after I left Indonesia, representatives from the UNHCR [the United Nations body with responsibility for refugee welfare] declared that refugees there, particularly single men, would be lucky to be resettled in two decades, if ever."

Ealom's view of the UNHCR began to change in Indonesia. He points out its weakness, "In each country where it operated it was essentially made to do a devil's bargain. The choice was to take direction from the national government and its immigration policies or to take its people saving business elsewhere."

### Regional bully

Worse still is Australia's long reach as a regional bully. Ealom shows how Australia funded a new passport system in the Solomon Islands in order to toughen regional borders. Australia also influenced Fiji to deny another Manus escapee, Loghman Sawari, the ability to make a legal claim for asylum, instead deporting him back to PNG.

After almost drowning attempting to come to Australia by boat, Ealom

makes it to Christmas Island. On his way he writes of his thinking about Australia: "A civilised country, with good people. What could go wrong?"

What could go wrong indeed. Ealom finds himself on the wrong side of former Labor PM Kevin Rudd's announcement that "unauthorised maritime arrivals" would never be resettled in Australia. He is imprisoned and then sent to Manus Island in PNG.

He describes Christmas Island detention centre where, "Architects had drawn up the blueprints, engineers had built the buildings, consultants had determined the staffing levels, and hired the workers. First world stuff.

**Ealom exposes the horrors on Manus, from the use of DDT, to constantly rotten food, and overflowing toilets that force the men to wade through raw sewage**

Yet when it came to the basic task of allowing us to use the pay phone: chaos ... this was a callous stupidity that almost felt deliberate."

He is given a wristband that says "EML 019", his boat ID. "The insistence of using letters and numbers instead of names was a classic ploy I should have recognised by now. In Burma I was forced to have my picture taken with a number plate and to call myself Bengali. Here I was EML 019."

### Detained on Manus

After arriving on Manus, a PNG government official reads the new arrivals a speech. "You were transferred here to be processed under Papua New Guinea law, by Papua New Guinea officials, to be resettled in Papua New Guinea if your claim to asylum is judged to be valid." Ealom writes: "He ended his speech by declaring 'you will never set foot in Australia' ... At a stroke he had given the game away. The line, if not the entire speech had been scripted by someone in the Australian government."

Ealom exposes the horrors on Manus, from

the use of DDT (banned worldwide) but regularly sprayed through the detention centre, to constantly rotten food, and overflowing toilets that force the men to wade through raw sewage.

He continues: "Most of the time, from what I had witnessed, people and the way they behaved were products of the power structures in which they operated. For the first time it seemed that an individual shared a unique portion of the blame. Scott Morrison appeared to relish the task of delivering his harsh and punishing policies."

Ealom eventually makes it to Canada, where he receives very different treatment. A Canadian judge backs Ealom's account, writing in a formal judgement: "You were held there for almost four years. During this time at Manus the conditions were intolerable, there was poor food, you were forced to sleep in shipping containers that were unbearably hot."

Ealom damns Australia's approach. "Refugees were locked up without charge, rebranded as transferees, their names swapped for numbers, as they were dumped in a third country to be terrorised indefinitely. How was that different from what was taking place under other dictatorial regimes?"

Well over 200 refugees remain on PNG and Nauru, and around 70 Medevac refugees are still locked up in Australia after more than eight years.

As vaccination rates increase and Australia opens up, we will need more people in the streets to demand welcome, freedom and permanency for refugees.

**Chris Breen**

# AUKUS AND NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY WHY AUSTRALIA'S RULERS BACK THE US

**Ruby Wawn** argues that the Australian government is not surrendering sovereignty to the US through the nuclear subs pact but pursuing its own imperialist interests

SCOTT MORRISON'S new AUKUS alliance and the move to acquire nuclear submarines takes Australia further into aggressive military confrontation with China.

Some on the left have called the deal a "blow to Australian sovereignty" and independence.

Former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating used an opinion piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald* to criticise Morrison for doing "the bidding of another great power" and surrendering "Australia's sovereignty by locking the country and its military forces into the force structure of the United States".

This echoes a long-running idea that Australia acts as a lackey of the US, with Australia joining US wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq instead of standing up for Australia's interests. But in fact Australia has often been more aggressively militaristic than the US, with Australian governments seeing the alliance as a way of asserting Australia's own imperialist interests.

## Nuclear subs deal

The nuclear submarines deal, far from being pushed on Australia by the US, was driven by the Australian government.

The plan was 18 months in the making, after Morrison first raised the idea of nuclear submarines with the Department of Defence in early 2020.

While previous Liberal leaders, including Tony Abbott, had toyed with the idea of nuclear submarines, Morrison set the wheels in motion by ordering a discussion paper and the formation of a secret taskforce to explore the feasibility of acquiring the technology.

As *The Guardian* reported, "British sources said the conversations about the nuclear power deal were initiated by the Australians in March." Morrison first spoke to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, gaining his

support, and the pair then raised the plan with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G7 meeting in June.

The deal will see Australia gain at least eight nuclear-powered submarines, becoming the seventh nation with nuclear submarines and only the second in history, after Britain, to gain access to US nuclear technology.

Australia will also acquire long range missiles, unmanned underwater vehicles and more US troops joining the 2500 already stationed at US bases on Australian soil.

Morrison claims that Australia will also need to spend more on defence as part of the new partnership. The 2021 Defence budget is already at \$44.62 billion, a 15 per cent jump on last year.

AUKUS, a trilateral security partnership with the US and UK, is aimed squarely against China.

While none of the three AUKUS leaders mentioned China at their press conference, it is clear the "new challenges" Morrison referred to meant China and the threat it poses to US dominance in the region.

## Australian imperialism

The enthusiasm for a military partnership with two of the largest militaries in the world continues the pattern of Australian imperialism asserting its own interests in the region with the backing of the dominant global power.

Australian imperialism in the Pacific dates back to the emergence of an Australian ruling class in the 1850s that looked to grab control of resources, trade and investment.

In the late 1800s, Australia repeatedly pressured Britain to seize control of islands in the Pacific, including Fiji, Vanuatu and New Guinea. Following the First World War it colonised Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

Its sole interest was to exploit the

**The nuclear submarines deal, far from being pushed the US, was driven by the Australian government**

resources and labour of the Pacific Islands, and keep other powers out of the South Pacific.

Initially the colonies turned to Britain to safeguard these interests. But Australian and British interests were not always identical. Britain, with global interests, often saw the demands of the Australian colonies to acquire more South Pacific territories as a nuisance. On several occasions, most dramatically over New Guinea, the Australian colonies took action to force Britain to seize more territory.

After the Second World War, as British imperialism declined and a much more powerful player emerged, Australia turned to the US to ensure its control over the region.

While Australia's military spending far outstrips any of the small Pacific islands or nearby countries like Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia or the Philippines, Australia is no match against a major power like China, which has produced more ships, submarines, aircraft and missiles than any other country in the last 20 years.

In order to ensure regional dominance in the South Pacific and global influence out of proportion to its size, Australia's rulers have worked to strengthen Washington's commitment to security in the region. Australia's strategy of keeping a powerful friend to ensure its defence has seen it follow the US into every major military war they've launched since 1945.

In the late 1990s, Australia's backyard in the Pacific was in turmoil. Suharto's regime in Indonesia had fallen, with Australia launching military action in East Timor. By 2001, Australia held growing concerns over an "arc of instability" in the Pacific.

But the US had decided that Indonesia "was not as strategically important", prompting Defence to call for a massive increase in the military budget, and the Australian government

concerned that it needed to pull the US further into the region to ensuring its own influence.

So when US President George Bush invaded Afghanistan and then Iraq, launching a “war on terror”, then Prime Minister John Howard invoked the ANZUS Treaty and enthusiastically committed troops. Far from simply doing the US’s bidding, Australian troops were dispatched in the hopes of bolstering the US-Australia alliance, in the hope of securing a more sympathetic ear when Australian interests were on the line. “We are paying our dues now, in case we require American assistance in the future”, explained military expert Paul Dibb.

The US invasion of Iraq and efforts to control its oil resources also benefited Australian capitalism with Australian oil companies’ profits rising.

Australia is a significant regional player and an imperialist power in its own right. Its alliances with the US and UK are designed to serve those interests.

Seeing them as a threat to “Australian sovereignty” misunderstands why Australia’s rulers want to tie themselves to the US. It also feeds the “left nationalist” idea that Australian nationalism could somehow be a progressive force, if Australia was more “independent” of the US.

This view makes left nationalists sympathetic to the establishment figures who have criticised the AUKUS alliance in similar terms. In addition to Paul Keating, another who wants Australia to distance itself from the US is former Defence Department official Hugh White. He argues that, to avoid war with China, Australia should significantly increase defence spending and consider acquiring nuclear missiles.

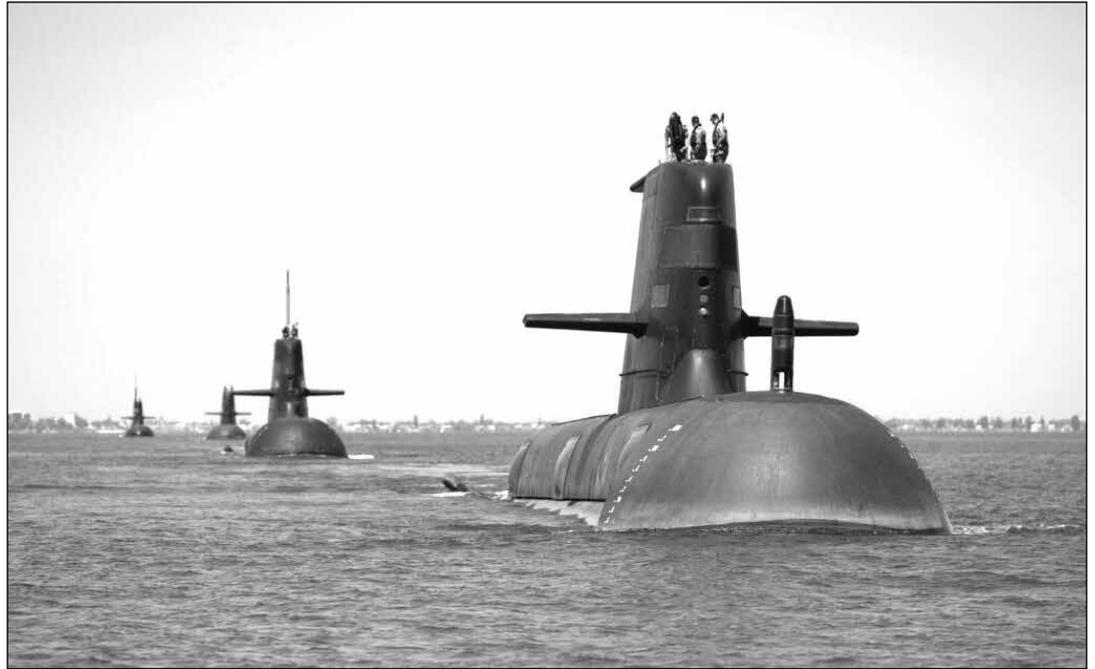
This is not an anti-war position. It means pouring millions more into weapons that could be funding schools, hospitals and a climate transition. Support for such figures from the left can only undermine the struggle against militarism and war.

The interests of Australian capitalism mean that Australian nationalism and foreign policy will always serve the Australian ruling class’ efforts to dominate the region and defend their profits. Left nationalism can only mean accepting these aims.

## China

In the last decade, Australian governments have become increasingly focused on the rise of China.

While the mainstream media paints China as the aggressor, the



**Above: Australia wants to acquire nuclear submarines from the US**

Australian government’s actions have been just as belligerent.

Senior officials and Defence Minister Peter Dutton have been fuelling the possibility of military confrontation, claiming Australia is “already under attack” and that the possibility of a Chinese attack on Taiwan “should not be discounted”.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott even used a speech in Taiwan in October to suggest China could “lash out disastrously very soon” under the “cult of the new red emperor”.

China’s fast growing economy, military expansion and interest in the Pacific make it a threat both to Australia’s regional dominance and the US-dominated system of trade and alliances that benefit Australia.

Australian influence in the south Pacific still far eclipses that of China. Australia is by far the largest aid giver in the Pacific, providing \$864 million in aid this year. By comparison China’s aid in the region is actually shrinking, spending \$169 million in 2019 down from \$246 million in 2018.

And as COVID ravages the Pacific, vaccine imperialism has seen Australia provide 600,000 vaccine doses to the region, while China has provided 300,000 doses of its Sino-pharm vaccine.

For the Australian ruling class, keeping rival powers out of the region and maintaining the current “rules based system” of global trade is essential for its military and economic interests.

China is Australia’s largest trading partner, accounting for nearly a third

of Australia’s global trade. In 2020 alone we exported \$159 billion in goods and services to China.

As an export based economy, Australia is reliant on global trade arrangements but it wants the US to set the terms of trade. Maintaining US hegemony gives Australia a seat at the table.

In a more regionally divided world Australia’s rulers fear they won’t have the weight to push back against what the G7 describes as China’s “non-market policies and practices”.

These aims are outlined in the Australian government’s 2016 Defence White Paper, which lists, “challenges to the stability of the rules-based global order, including competition between countries and major powers trying to promote their interests outside of the established rules” as a key concern.

It concludes that, “The global strategic and economic weight of the United States will be essential to the continued stability of the rules-based global order on which Australia relies for our security and prosperity.”

China threatens to challenge this status-quo and the Western powers are prepared to throw around their military might to stop it.

For the left the main enemy is at home. Ordinary working class Australians have no interest in waging war against China or spending billions of dollars to acquire nuclear technologies.

We need to oppose AUKUS and Australia’s military buildup as well as the drive to war.

# GLASGOW SUMMIT WHY COP26 WON'T SOLVE THE CLIMATE CRISIS

**Martin Empson** explains what COP26 is and why global summits have a history of failure to take the action on climate change that's needed, in an extract from his new pamphlet

WORLD LEADERS will descend on Glasgow for the COP26 climate summit in November. Delayed a year by the COVID crisis, it is being talked up by politicians and the media as a “last chance” to solve the climate crisis. But, as the name suggests, it is actually the 26th summit in a quarter of a century of failure.

The year 2021 has brought home the terrifying reality of the climate crisis. Flooding, wildfires and hurricanes have hit tens of thousands of people across the world.

On 8 August, the US Fire Centre reported over 39,000 wildfires burning 3.5 million acres. At the same time—but receiving less media attention—fires in Siberia were bigger than all the other fires in the world combined. Smoke from them was detected at the North Pole for the first time.

The environmental crisis is exacerbated by existing social fault lines—class, gender and race. In Madagascar, a prolonged drought saw 1.1 million people without food. Aid agencies said it was the first famine caused solely by climate change.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, published in August, warned of “code red” for humanity. The IPCC said that the worst scenarios for climate change would only be avoided through immediate government action.

Many activists will hope that COP26 will deliver the action we need to avoid catastrophe.

But talk of COP26 as the “last chance” for the climate masks reality. The COP process has been a failure.

Despite pledges by politicians today—and their predecessors since the 1990s—the environmental crisis has become rapidly and dramatically worse.

COP26 is the 26th meeting of the Conference of the Parties—the signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The first COP meeting in 1995 led to what is probably the most famous international agreement on climate change—the Kyoto Protocol, in 1997. The first period of the Kyoto Protocol ran until 2012, when it was extended at a COP meeting in Doha, Qatar until 2020.

While it seems like progress is being made, the process is slow and flawed.

There was an infamous meeting of the COP in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009. Copenhagen was supposed to agree further emissions cuts that built on those agreed in Kyoto and saw major mobilisations by environmentalists, trade unions, NGOs and the left.

The reality was very different. Barack Obama arrived and announced an Accord, agreed separately between the US and China, India, Brazil and South Africa. A deal at Copenhagen that would impose binding emissions cuts on the US economy was the opposite to what US capitalists wanted.

The Copenhagen Accord made it look like action was agreed, but stripped out any binding commitments to action.

In 2015, the Paris Agreement was signed amid much fanfare. One small step forward was the decision by delegates to agree to limit warming to below 2 degrees above pre-industrial levels. And to say that this should “preferably” be kept to 1.5 degrees.

It was won through a combination of pressure from negotiating blocs from the Global South and small island nations inside the summit, and the big protests outside.

At the heart of the Paris Agreement were commitments to make Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Essentially NDCs are promises by countries of how much they intend to reduce emissions. The problem was that the NDCs pledged at Paris would, according to the UN itself, take the world to 3.2 degrees of warming.

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**Despite pledges by politicians and their predecessors since the 1990s, the crisis has become dramatically worse**

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Even if countries were to make pledges at the correct levels, the NDCs are not legally binding or enforceable. While Paris was portrayed as a major step forward, the detail of the agreement showed the opposite.

## Why does COP fail?

The reality of the Paris Agreement has been even more disappointing in the years since it was signed. Signatory countries were due to submit updated NDCs in 2020.

The independent scientific website Climate Action Tracker, which monitors government action, found that by July 2021 some 94 countries had not updated their targets. And only 16 countries had submitted stronger targets.

But the problem with COP is not just that countries are unable or unwilling to adhere to strong emission reduction targets.

The Global North—particularly the most powerful economies and especially the US—have disproportionate power in the negotiations.

By promising cash or applying political pressure, they can influence other countries. For instance, in the run up to the COP15 conference in Copenhagen, African politicians and negotiators were demanding major action and help for the continent. But by the time of the conference some of these had collapsed into a much softer position.

According to Mithika Mwenda of the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance, this meant “undermining the bold positions of our negotiators and ministers... and threatening the very future of Africa”. This was so shocking that the G77 group of Global South countries’ lead negotiator, Lumumba Di-Aping from Sudan, was moved to tears.

## The climate politics we need

The year 2019 saw the emergence of an inspirational new climate movement. It seemed to explode onto the

streets out of nowhere, but had deep roots.

The COP process has seen protests and demonstrations over many years. On two occasions—during the Copenhagen and Paris COPs—global protest movements took place on a massive scale.

Such demonstrations are important as they can pressure the negotiators for stronger action.

But in the aftermath of Copenhagen, the environmental movement was demoralised for several years. That demoralisation arose out of a misplaced hope that the summit would bring about real change.

If we are to build a longer-term climate movement and fight for climate justice and a sustainable society, we need a different set of politics.

Firstly, we need to understand that the COP process is part of the capitalist system. Any real challenge to the workings of capitalism will be shut down by the most powerful economies. There is no reason to believe that Joe Biden will be any different at COP26.

The White House statement on his April 2021 Leaders' Summit on Climate explains his agenda for COP. There is nothing in it about fundamentally challenging the fossil fuel economy.

Biden's statement contains much emphasis on new technology as a solution. These technologies will mean "enormous new economic opportunities to build the industries of the future".

He wants to see solutions that allow capitalist accumulation to continue, or offer new opportunities to make money.

Capitalism is not simply destructive to the environment because it burns fossil fuels and degrades natural resources. The root cause of capitalism's ongoing environmental damage is because it is a system based on endless growth.

Capitalists have to constantly expand in order to avoid going under because they are locked into competition with one another. This expansion requires more resources and more fuels. As the revolutionary Karl Marx explained, the capitalists cannot break from this logic.

"Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake—by this formula classical economy expressed the historical mission of the bourgeoisie," he wrote.

Capitalism is a system fueled by competition between individual corporations and governments. There will



**Above: Rally outside an environment ministers' meeting in Milan, Italy in the lead up to COP26**

be no serious action on carbon emissions because it is not in the interest of each individual entity to do so.

In order to deal with the environmental crises that we are experiencing today, we need to take on the system itself. This means building movements that can demand radical action from governments, but also challenge the system's priorities.

In the short term, we should raise demands that will begin the transition to a zero carbon economy.

We need a rapid shift in all sectors of our economy—building, transport, agriculture, energy generation and housing. Environmental activists, together with socialists and trade unionists need to place workers' demands at the heart of our movement. The fight for a "just transition" must be a fundamental part of it.

The increasing recognition of the importance of voices from the Global South, Indigenous movements and Black people is also important. It is a step towards building a united movement that can challenge capitalist destruction of the environment.

Capitalism can never be a sustainable system. Even if capitalism could abandon fossil fuels, it would still cause environmental destruction due to its unsustainable relationship to the planet.

Marx explained that capitalism destroyed the historic relationship that human society had had with the natural world, turning nature into a commodity.

And he argued that this led to a rupture in the "metabolic relationship" between human society and the natural world. This relationship, under

capitalism, was no longer sustainable. Capital just saw nature as part of the production process.

Writing in 1857-8, he said, "For the first time, nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognised as a power for itself. And the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production."

But Marx didn't just criticise capitalism. He argued that it would be possible to create a sustainable world, and create an entirely different relationship between humans and nature.

Such a socialist world would be based on radically different economic priorities. Production would be for need, not for profit. In a socialist society, production would take place democratically, with workers discussing what needs to be made.

Such democratic economic planning would be very different from the topdown state planned economies of Russia and the Eastern Bloc, which claimed to be communist.

Marx argued that the power to overthrow capitalism lay among the workers whose labour is essential for it to function.

At one of the key demonstrations outside the Copenhagen COP, radical activists first raised a slogan that has become increasingly common on climate protests—"System Change not Climate Change". Today, as capitalism continues to give us economic and environmental crisis, we need to scrap it, and build a revolutionary alternative.

# WHY THE RIGHT HATES CRITICAL RACE THEORY

**Tom Fiebig** looks at the culture wars around Critical Race Theory and argues that understanding the systemic basis of racism is vital if we are to fight it.

ACROSS THE world, the push to ban Critical Race Theory (CRT) in schools and government settings has become a rallying cry for the right. In Australia, Pauline Hanson with help from the Coalition passed a motion in the Senate symbolically “banning” the teaching of CRT as part of the national curriculum.

Janet Albrechtsen, a columnist with *The Australian*, summed up the view of many on the right when she wrote in August of “the historical determinism of CRT with its maniacal demonising of the average white person”.

CRT is a legal theory which originated in the work of civil rights scholars and activists in the 1970s and 1980s.

Black activists and legal scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw, who also coined the term “intersectionality”, developed the theory in response to the perceived failures of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in the US.

The theory explains racism as not simply reducible to individual privilege, prejudice or bias but as a systemic and structural phenomenon, embedded in society and manifested in social institutions such as the legal system. Crenshaw focuses on how “race” intersects with law and, consequently, how racial injustice is encoded in law as a form of white supremacy.

CRT understands “race” as a social construct but recognises that racism is real and has material, negative effects.

It points out, for instance, that despite formal legal equality Black people in the US face higher levels of policing and imprisonment, and that formally colour-blind laws like stop and search result in disproportionate targeting of Black people.

CRT scholars call for the identification of, resistance to and overhaul of the structures in society that reproduce Black people’s oppression.

They vary in how they think this

should be done but, at its best, CRT calls the entire system into question for being founded on systemic racism, and points in a revolutionary direction.

## Justice

In 2020, the brutal murder of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin sent shockwaves through America and the world, spawning a militant and multi-racial mass movement on the streets that declared “Black Lives Matter”.

The movement called for a widescale reckoning with racism in America and demanded justice for victims of police violence, the defunding of the police and, where it was most radical, the abolition of the police and an end to prisons.

During the rebellion, activists pressured businesses and organisations to declare themselves outside. Under pressure, some business schools and organisations hosted anti-racist seminars and training.

As the BLM rebellion grew, so did the numbers of people interested in ways to understand racism in structural and systemic terms. CRT offered to provide such an understanding.

Republicans, led by former US president Donald Trump, hit back in reaction to this rise of anti-racist ideas and struggle.

Trump banned the teaching of CRT from federal diversity training. He issued an executive order to cancel government funding for programs that mentioned “white privilege” or “critical race theory” on the basis that it represented “divisive, un-American propaganda”.

The campaign against CRT has been taken up by Republicans at every level, who say that schools teaching CRT are trying to “brainwash” kids and should teach “both sides” of history.

While Biden rescinded Trump’s order, Republican-controlled legislatures continue to introduce and

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**Trump issued an executive order to cancel funding for programs that mentioned “white privilege” or “critical race theory”**  
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pass bills to restrict or ban educators in public schools and governmental settings from teaching ideas linked to CRT.

For conservatives, attacking CRT is a way to attack any criticism of our racist and unequal society. The more astute among them acknowledge racism but say that it’s a product of individual behaviour, letting employers and the state off the hook and providing a basis for their catchphrases that people should “stop being offended” and “just get over it”.

In waging their culture war, US Republicans hope to capture some of the frustrations among working class and middle class supporters, for whom life is getting tougher, and deflect this anger onto BLM.

At a deeper level, they hope to counter the sustained challenge that CRT represents to the ideology of “the American Dream”.

In contrast, the BLM movement has helped expose a deeply unequal system that is shot through with oppression and in which racism significantly effects the lives and opportunities of ordinary people—especially poor, female, disabled, migrant or LGBTI+ sections of the working class.

## Shock jock

The culture war has since spread to Australia, with conservative media-pundits like radio shock jock Alan Jones, Sky News’ Chris Kenny and politicians like One Nation’s Pauline Hanson and Warren Mundine from the Liberal Party leading the charge.

Mundine has called CRT “the most racist” theory he has read in years, calling it the “eugenics of our time”. For Kenny, a senior advisory group member to the government’s Indigenous Voice committee, CRT is part of “worldwide movement to view all white people as privileged and innately racist, and to see everything through the prism of identity politics”.

The pandemic has exposed deep

class inequalities. While the ruling class push against CRT is currently a marginal feature of conservative politics in Australia, this could change as they look to divert anger among workers through racism.

Indigenous-led marches on Invasion Day continue to grow year-on-year.

These inspiring marches represent, for conservatives, a similar if not deeper challenge to the foundations of the Australian system as BLM does for America, exposing a settler-colonial state built on dispossession, genocide, and ongoing racist brutality against Aboriginal and Torres Islander people.

The growing sympathy among the wider population for Aboriginal people's struggles, and a growing willingness to confront Australia's racist history—witnessed in the popularity of Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu*—is causing concern among the right.

The right has responded by not only trying to discredit Pascoe's specific arguments (which have their flaws), but by defending old-school racist ideas of Aboriginal societies as "primitive", casting doubt on the widespread evidence of a complex and egalitarian society.

The beginnings of a campaign against CRT in Australia is emerging alongside the transphobic and homophobic campaigns to ban "Safe Schools" (a program teaching children about LGBTI+ identities and relationships, consent, and anti-bullying) and the campaign for a "religious freedom bill" that gives religious institutions exemptions to discriminate against LGBTI+ staff or students.

These campaigns represent ideological battles about what ideas and values and, ultimately, whose perspectives should be taught at schools.

For the right, it represents a struggle to reassert the ability to justify exclusions, expulsions, and oppression.

### Defence

Socialists must oppose the right-wing attack on CRT and expose it as the racist ideological culture war it is. We should ally with all those with a stake in defending the need for bottom-up driven education about "race" and racism.

At the moment, there is still far too little teaching of Australia's sordid racist history within Australian classrooms. There needs to be far more, not less, of such teaching, guided by



Indigenous educators.

We need to go further than a mere defence of CRT and argue that anti-racism (and anti-oppression) should be taught in schools and that education is inherently political. Anti-racists must therefore also stand with anti-homophobia and transphobia campaigners.

Some say that there is no room for politics in schools. But this runs against the reality that schools are never politically neutral settings. Ideas of "race", class, gender, nationalism, ability etc are found in institutional values, educational expectations, in the formal curriculum (what is prioritised, what is absent) and, of course, in the experiences of students themselves.

From championing the anthem and celebrating nationalist occasions like ANZAC Day and Australia Day, to commemorating Captain Cook and the Diggers while sidelining teaching of Aboriginal society and invasion, schools are deeply and explicitly political spaces. Universities are little better.

In a racist society, the idea that education institutions should be politically neutral spaces merely permits the dominant ideas of the ruling class to go uncontested.

Teachers for Refugees were faced with these sorts of objections when they campaigned by wearing T-shirts emblazoned with pro-refugee slogans in their schools and later when, in the highpoint of the "Kids off, all off"

**The right-wing attack on Critical Race Theory is an attempt to push back against support for the Black Lives Matter movement**

campaign, they walked out of schools to join a refugee rally.

Socialists go further in our explanations and approaches to fighting oppression than many CRT proponents are prepared to do.

While CRT points to a deep and structural relationship between racism, the legal system and the state, there is confusion about what sustains this relationship—with some scholars focusing on unconscious biases and privilege while others rightly stress material factors.

Reactionary ideas come from the top and Marxists point the finger at the ruling class, who benefit from oppression and encourage it.

We highlight the need for solidarity among the working class and oppressed—where we all fight reactionary ideas and policies, whoever is the target.

For Marxists, racism has material roots in the slave trade, colonialism and empire. Racism helps the ruling class weaken potential class solidarity, making it easier for bosses to exploit workers for profit.

CRT doesn't have a clear theory of change while Marxism offers a historical understanding of racism that points to the need for collective actions that can challenge systemic racism.

Mass mobilisations like BLM are a fantastic launch pad but we need to aim higher—for strikes that unite the working class in all its diversity and cut off the profits which sustains the system.

# AUSTRALIA DUMPS PNG REFUGEES

## KEEP UP THE FIGHT TO BRING THEM HERE

By Ian Rintoul

ON 6 October, a joint statement by the PNG and Australian governments announced that PNG would “assume full management of regional processing services ... and full responsibility for those who remain”.

It was the latest move by the Australian government to use PNG as a dumping ground for the asylum seekers it first sent to the horror of Manus Island detention centre in 2013.

The declaration gives the 124 refugees and asylum seekers who remain in PNG the “choice” of settling in PNG, or transferring to Nauru before 31 December 2021. (Although the option of transfer to Nauru is not open to refugees with PNG families.)

But the choice is no choice at all. Australia signed an agreement with Nauru on 24 September, to maintain offshore detention there, indefinitely.

As for PNG, it remains unsafe for refugees and incapable of providing enduring security. Assaults and robberies of refugees are still common; a reality which has rendered refugees prisoners in their scattered accommodation in Port Moresby hotels.

Although the agreement says that refugees will be entitled to citizenship and family reunion, the conditions are not spelled out.

In any case, PNG is also incapable of providing the education and employment that refugees and their families need. Despite signing the Refugee Convention in 1986, PNG has never agreed to resettle refugees.

As the UNHCR politely put it, “the systems needed for long-term successful local integration in PNG are still undeveloped and largely absent.”

Given the precarious existence of refugees who have been living in Port Moresby for the last two years, no one has any confidence that the agreement is worth the paper it is written on.

Ironically, the agreement highlights the precarious existence of refugees from Manus and Nauru who are still being held in detention in Australia or are subsisting in the community, denied any security, on bridging visas.

The agreement would seem to put



**Above: Refugees dumped by Australia in Port Moresby, PNG**

the final nail in the coffin of PNG ever being used as an offshore destination for people seeking asylum in Australia, yet leaves so much unfinished business.

Those refugees transferred from PNG to Australia under the Medevac legislation but still being held in detention, must be freed.

The decision also has potential implications for any deal with New Zealand. With Australia formally severing its control over the refugees, it will be open to New Zealand to directly accept refugees from PNG. But any deal between Australia and New Zealand will only refer to refugees held on Nauru.

### **In limbo in Australia**

In 2013, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd declared that no one sent to Manus or Nauru would ever be resettled in Australia; a declaration made repeatedly since then by Liberal Prime Ministers.

But there are hundreds of refugees from PNG living in the Australian community on precarious bridging visas. It was already clear that those refugees (and hundreds of others from Nauru) have effectively been resettled in Australia.

The declaration makes it even clearer that they will not be going

back to PNG.

Yet they are being deprived of permanent visas (and the right to family reunion, education and travel that goes with them) and the resettlement income and accommodation support that would normally be available.

Despite the declaration, the torture of those sent offshore hasn't ended. And, shamefully, Labor remains committed to offshore detention, with Labor's Home Affairs spokesperson, Kristina Keneally, repeating that, “offshore processing was an important part of Operation Sovereign Borders”.

Labor's commitment to Operation Sovereign Borders also means that while it will grant permanent visas to all those refugees on temporary protection visas, it has refused to offer permanent visas to those refugees from PNG and Nauru living in Australia on bridging visas.

We need to get rid of Scott Morrison and the Liberal government, but it will take more than electing Labor to end offshore detention.

To end Operation Sovereign Borders, the refugee movement will need to keep up the protests and its demands to bring those still on PNG and Nauru to Australia; to free all those being held in detention in Australia, and grant permanent visas to all.

**There are hundreds of refugees from PNG living in the Australian community on precarious bridging visas**

**Solidarity**