

# LABOR'S COPPING OUT ON CLIMATE

## STOP EXPANDING COAL AND GAS



### CLIMATE

Unions tour opposes  
Pilliga gas project

### IRAN

Regime fails to  
crush protest wave

### REFUGEES

Eyewitness from  
Indonesia

# Solidarity WHAT WE STAND FOR

## Capitalism is a system of crisis and war

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

## Workers power and socialism

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

## What about elections and parliament?

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

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

## We are internationalists

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

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

We oppose imperialism and support all

genuine national liberation struggles. We oppose Australian nationalism.

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

## Oppression and liberation

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

## Linking up the struggles

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

## Educate, agitate, organise

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

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

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

## SOLIDARITY MEETINGS AND BRANCHES

### National

Online meetings via Zoom  
6.30pm every Thursday  
See [fb.com/soliaus/events](https://fb.com/soliaus/events) for details  
or contact [solidarity@solidarity.net.au](mailto:solidarity@solidarity.net.au)

### Sydney

For more information contact:  
Adam on 0400 351 694  
[sydney@solidarity.net.au](mailto:sydney@solidarity.net.au)

### Melbourne

For more information contact:  
Chris on 0403 013 183  
[melbourne@solidarity.net.au](mailto:melbourne@solidarity.net.au)

### Perth

For more information contact:  
Phil on 0423 696 312

### Brisbane

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

### Canberra

For more information contact:  
[canberra@solidarity.net.au](mailto:canberra@solidarity.net.au)

## CONTACT US

### Magazine office

Phone 02 8964 7116  
Fax 02 9012 0814

### Email

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

### Website

[www.solidarity.net.au](http://www.solidarity.net.au)

### Facebook

Search for "Solidarity Magazine" or  
go to [fb.com/soliaus](https://fb.com/soliaus)

### Twitter

[@soli\\_australia](https://twitter.com/soli_australia)  
[twitter.com/soli\\_australia](https://twitter.com/soli_australia)

### Solidarity No. 165

November-December 2022

ISSN 1835-6834

Responsibility for election

comment is taken by James

Supple, 410 Elizabeth St, Surry

Hills NSW 2010.

Printed by El Faro, Newtown  
NSW.

## SUBSCRIBE TO SOLIDARITY MAGAZINE

*Solidarity* is published monthly. Make sure you don't miss an issue—pay by credit card online at [www.solidarity.net.au/subscribe](http://www.solidarity.net.au/subscribe) or send in this form with a cheque or money order and we will mail you *Solidarity* each month.

☐ 5 issues—\$15    ☐ One year (12 issues)—\$36    ☐ Two years (24 issues)—\$65

Name ..... Phone .....

E-mail ..... Address .....

Cheques payable to Solidarity Publishing. Send to PO Box 375 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.

## Things they say

**I'm only going to build it if it makes money.**

Santos CEO, Kevin Gallagher, makes his attitude to green energy projects perfectly clear

**Putting all your money into green-washing, putting all your money into COP, that's not going to help anyone.**

Andrew Twigg Forrester with one eye on the planet and the other on his profits as Fortescue Future Industries plans to be producing 15 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030.

**Any nuclear attack against the United States or its Allies and partners, including the use of non-strategic nuclear weapons, is unacceptable and will result in the end of the Kim regime**  
US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin threatens North Korea with annihilation

**We don't want to see more strikes, we want to see more pay rises.**

Sally McManus runs up the white flag

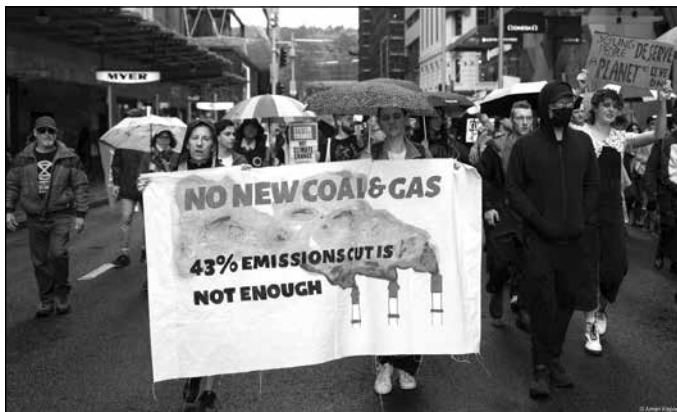
**I think this is an attempt to unionise certain private workplaces.**

Teal independent Zali Steggall shows her pro-business colours as she reacts with horror to Labor's industrial relations bill

**I would love to be having a front page of *The Telegraph* with a plane taking off to Rwanda. That's my dream, that's my dream, it's my obsession.**  
British Home Secretary Suella Braverman, dreams of sending asylum seekers offshore.

# CONTENTS

## ISSUE 165 NOV-DEC 2022



### Stop Labor's coal and gas expansion

**9** Unions oppose Pilliga gas project

**13** COP27 summit won't stop the climate crisis

**18** Should we blow up pipelines?

### Australia

**7** Labor's IR bill won't solve pay crisis

**8** WA nurses demand pay rise and more staff

**10** Dan Andrews' progressive sheen covers law and order crackdown



### 14 Indonesia—Australia's other offshore refugee prison



### Reviews

**11** Lockdown by Chip Le Grand



### International

**12** Protests in Iran show no sign of slowing



### 16 Taiwan and the threat of imperialist war





# INSIDE THE \$YSTEM

## Youth detention surge in Queensland

TWO-THIRDS OF children in youth detention in Queensland are Indigenous, as the state plans a fourth youth detention centre amid a climbing number of children in custody.

Youth detention is in “a state of crisis”, according to Australia’s National Children’s Commissioner Anne Hollonds.

There has also been a new surge in children being held alongside adult detainees in police watch houses according to the ABC—described by Hollonds as serious human rights abuse. After an outcry in 2019, the Queensland government pledged not to keep children there. It backtracked following a law and order campaign last year, imposing harsher bail laws that keep more children in detention.

One 16-year-old girl with a history of mental health problems following trauma was held in a watch house for six days after being refused bail, and denied any mental health treatment.

Hollonds told the ABC that “locking up children does not reduce offending, in fact it has the opposite effect” meaning the government was “wasting public money on approaches that are not keeping the community safer”.

On 31 October Indigenous children made up 195 out of the 291 young people in detention in Queensland.

## Wages set to drop 5.4 per cent

WORKERS WILL lose 12 years of wage increases in just three years, the latest Reserve Bank estimates show. By the end of 2024 average wages face a cut of 5.4 per cent compared to prior to the pandemic in March 2020. Most of the pain will be felt this year, with wages to go backward by 4.45 per cent and inflation reaching 8 per cent by December.

As Greg Jericho of the Centre for Future Work put it “at the end of 2023 workers will on average only be able to buy the same amount of items and services with their wage as they were 15 years earlier in December 2008.” Living standards are being smashed.

## Food poverty crisis as cost of living jumps



MORE THAN two million Australians experienced food insecurity at some time in the last year—21 per cent of the population. This means they ran out of food due to lack of money or went whole days without eating.

Surging inflation, grocery and power prices all led to a significant increase on the year before. That’s the finding of Foodbank’s annual survey the *Hunger Report*.

“I’ve never seen anything like what we are seeing right now,” its boss Brianna Casey told *The Guardian*. The charity says it has increased its food provision by 21 per cent over in the 12 months to July this year.

Over half of households who were food insecure had someone in paid work, and 30 per cent of all those with a mortgage also had to forego food at some time.

During the pandemic, the government doubled JobSeeker payments, lifting 646,000 people out of poverty. Now income support is back way below the poverty line at just \$48 a day. The government has ruled out increasing it, even as the cost of living climbs.

## Rolfe inquest shows cops’ violence and racism

MORE EVIDENCE of racism and abuse by NT police has surfaced in the inquiry into the killing of Kumanyaji Walker by Constable Zachary Rolfe.

Rolfe joked about injuring a man who was wrongly arrested on 24 September 2019, just months before he fatally shot Walker. Rolfe chased the man and pushed him into a fence, causing him to need hospital treatment for an injured shoulder. “Turns out the dude wasn’t who we were looking for, and is now in a sling for nothing, ha ha, don’t run from police”, Rolfe said in a text along with the body cam footage he sent to a contact the next day.

After an arrest where he caused a man to hit a wall face-first, requiring stitches, he sent a text boasting “I’ve had some busy shifts lately. Mashed some dude’s face against a wall.” In all he was involved in 46 incidents of the use of force in three years in Alice Springs.

His former fiancée, Claudia Campagnaro, told the inquest he had also talked of wanting to join the SAS so he could “be paid to go out and shoot people”. He had also commented that he would “like” to kill someone while on duty so that he could “go on a holiday” by taking leave.

She said he regularly used racist terms about Indigenous people in Alice Springs, commenting that “Zach didn’t care about or like any of the Indigenous people there”. Rolfe was found not guilty of murdering Walker earlier this year.

## Tree planting claims require an area the size of the US

HALF THE land used for agriculture globally would be needed to accommodate countries’ tree planting pledges for climate offsets, a new report has found.

Planting trees to supposedly capture and store carbon has become a favourite carbon offset measure designed to allow continued pollution. It is one of the key measures many countries are relying on to meet their net zero by 2050 pledges contained in Nationally Determined Contributions under the global agreement on climate change.

But the amount of land needed for tree planting and other land use activities countries have promised amounts to 1.2 billion hectares, more than the total area of the US.

“Countries are loading up on land pledges to avoid the hard work of steeply reducing emissions from fossil fuels, decarbonizing food systems and stopping the destruction of forests and other ecosystems,” Melbourne Uni academic Kate Dooley, lead author of the Land Gap report said.

## Tech giant Microsoft dodging tax

MICROSOFT IS using a web of companies and tax havens as part of a “apparent aggressive tax avoidance” in Australia, a new report has found.

Microsoft’s main Australian subsidiary is owned by a network of companies that lead back to one based in Bermuda, a notorious tax haven. Despite admitting to \$5 billion of income in 2021 it said its profit was only \$231 million—a profit margin here of just 4.5 per cent, compared to a global profit margin of 42.3 per cent.

Similarly Google’s local subsidiary paid just 5.3 per cent tax on its profit of \$4.37 billion by reducing its taxable profit to only \$232 million.

It comes as the Tax Office’s annual report revealed that 32 per cent of large public companies paid no corporate tax at all in 2021. Fossil fuel giants who paid nothing included Ampol, BP, Glencore, ExxonMobil, AGL, Woodside, Shell, Whitehaven and Santos.

# EDITORIAL

## Don't cop Labor's excuses and delays—we have to fight to force real change

THE COST of everything keeps going up—with no sign of stopping.

There was shock when Labor's budget last month revealed that electricity bills will soar by 54 per cent over two years. But the government was not prepared to do anything about it, declaring that new spending would only push up inflation.

While we pay more, the gas and coal companies are making money hand over fist. Mining companies want us to pay the same obscene prices they can get overseas as a result of the war in Ukraine.

Gas company profits increased by up to \$40 billion last financial year, the Australia Institute estimates.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has been ruling out any idea of a windfall tax on these obscene profits for months—but is now finally considering action on gas prices.

But Labor's concern is more about business than workers' cost of living. Chalmers said that gas prices were "so extraordinarily high that they risk strangling industries" with manufacturers that rely on gas going broke.

But action on gas alone won't stop power prices rising.

The Australian Industry Group has admitted that "Unless coal prices also fall, lower gas prices would provide only mild relief from the extreme wholesale electricity prices".

It was still unclear what the government would do as we went to press. The most straightforward measure would be a price cap on what the gas companies can charge.

It should also seize the super-profits of the mining companies by forcing them to pay more tax. Better yet it could nationalise them, along with the power companies, in order to hold down prices. Queensland's still publicly-owned power stations have been able to keep down price rises there.

Meanwhile wages will drop almost 4.5 per cent this year after inflation.

Labor claims that its new industrial relations laws and plans for multi-employer bargaining will "get wages moving". Business groups have reacted hysterically. But very few workers will be able to access multi-employer bargaining—mostly low paid workers in childcare, cleaning and aged care.

The new laws even create further legal hurdles before workers can use strike action—restricting the right to



**Above: Nurses and public sector workers in WA are fighting the Labor state government to demand a pay rise**

strike further.

Pathetically, the ACTU is celebrating the changes and putting its hopes in legal manoeuvres at the Fair Work Commission to deliver wage increases.

But it's strike action that's required to win gains on pay and conditions.

Workers at the Knauf plant in Melbourne won a 5 per cent pay rise, increases to penalty and overtime rates and other improvements after 40 days locked out following strikes.

Nurses and public sector workers in WA are fighting for better pay rises from the Labor state government. But in NSW public sector strikes are winding down, with union leaders focused simply on an electoral campaign to get Labor in at next year's state election.

### Timid pace of change

Anthony Albanese's budget confirmed Labor's timidity and refusal to offer serious change. It is sticking with the outrageous stage three tax cuts, which shovel tens of billions of dollars to the rich.

It is also pouring money into the military, with defence spending up 8 per cent this year to \$48.7 billion, while it says there is no money to increase JobSeeker or fix hospitals and aged care. Albanese even told *The Australian* there was a blank cheque to spend "whatever was necessary" on weapons.

The government has also agreed to allow the US to base nuclear-capable B-52 bombers in the Northern Territory.

Labor has tried to use the COP27 summit in Egypt to spruik its credentials on climate change—despite Anthony Albanese's own decision to skip the summit.

Yet barely a week before, it announced a new fossil fuel subsidy of \$1.9 billion for the Middle Arm petrochemical plant in Darwin—designed to help open a whole new gas basin in the Beetaloo.

Labor is also backing the carbon bomb of the Scarborough gas project at the Burrup Hub in WA, Santos' Pilliga gas project at Narrabri, new offshore oil exploration, and refused to put a stop to new coal and gas projects. There are over 100 new fossil fuel projects in the pipeline.

Over climate, the cost of living and public spending we need much bigger protests and opposition to force Labor to deliver change.

Refugees are showing the way—planning a second convergence on Canberra on 29 November after 1500 rallied there in September.

With six months gone since the election, Labor has refused to ever offer a timeline to honour its promise to grant permanent visas to refugees on Temporary Protection Visas and SHEVs—let alone offer anything to the 1300 refugees from Nauru and PNG in Australia or the 10,000 unfairly refused refugee status under the Liberals' processing system.

We are going to need much more of this kind of action to win serious change.

.....  
**Anthony Albanese's budget confirmed Labor's timidity and refusal to offer serious change**

## Timid budget sees Labor refuse to act on cost of living shock

By James Supple

AFTER ALMOST a decade of the Coalition's cuts and inaction we need urgent change. But Labor's first budget, delivered in late October, is timid and conservative. It makes room for its modest election promises while delivering an approach any conservative would be proud of.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers boasted about his "spending restraint" and \$22 billion in savings.

The new government says "tough times" and a looming global recession has tied its hands. Chalmers claimed new spending would only fuel inflation—and that doing more is unaffordable because of the debt the Liberals left behind.

Media commentators echoed his claims about delivering a "responsible" approach.

But there is nothing responsible about sitting on your hands as living standards are smashed by rising inflation.

Workers face a 5.5 per cent real wage cut by the middle of next year. Inflation will soon be 8 per cent.

Chalmers talked of cost-of-living relief but most of it isn't coming for years. Increased childhood education and care subsidies, one of Labor's election promises, begins in the middle of next year. The extension of paid parental leave doesn't start until mid-2024 and will only reach six months in 2026.

One new announcement was a plan for a million new houses over five years through a "housing accord" with the states and the property industry. But this is no great achievement—a similar number were built in the last five years as well.

All Labor is funding is an extra 10,000 social houses, on top of 30,000 social and affordable homes already promised. This would only meet new demand for one year. And NSW and Victoria alone have more than 100,000 people already on the social housing waiting list.

Rents and house prices are still at obscene levels. But Labor's plan will do nothing to address the housing affordability crisis.

### Inflation fears

Energy bills are set to rise an eye-watering 56 per cent in the next two years. The money is going straight into the pockets of the coal and gas



**Above: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Treasurer Jim Chalmers**

companies due to high international prices.

Taking back their windfall profits and using them to stop bills surging, or imposing price caps, wouldn't add to inflation. It would simply keep prices where they are. What Labor is really saying is that workers have to cop cuts to living standards so companies can keep higher profits.

There is a pressing need to increase government spending: JobSeeker payments are well below the poverty line, hospitals and aged care are in crisis, public schools are still underfunded, and investment in renewable energy and new jobs for fossil workers is urgent.

The money to pay for it is there: if Labor was prepared to take on big business and the rich.

The most obvious step is scrapping the stage three tax cuts. Anthony Albanese is petrified of breaking his election promise to keep them. But it means he is already breaking another promise—acting on living standards when "everything is going up except your wages".

The top 3 per cent of income earners, those on over \$180,000, get the tax cuts' biggest benefits. In total they will cost a colossal \$254 billion over the next ten years.

One area where Labor is backing spending increases is the military. Defence spending is up this year to \$48.7 billion. And most of the cost of new weapons is still to come, including \$170 billion for nuclear subs.

And it is still budgeting \$1.5 bil-

lion over four years to run offshore detention on Nauru—something that should end immediately. There is nothing in the budget to deliver on promises for permanent visas for those on TPVs and SHEVs.

Labor also promised no new subsidies for fossil fuels, but it has confirmed \$1.9 billion for the "middle arm" petrochemical complex in Darwin—designed to support opening new gas mines in the Beetaloo basin.

There are tens of billions of dollars more that could be raised through taxing fat corporate profits.

Gas company profits were up \$40 billion last financial year alone, the Australia Institute estimates. Closing tax loopholes on that one industry could have pulled in an extra \$20 billion in tax.

All the mining companies are raking in cash. The original mining super-profits tax proposed under Kevin Rudd's Labor government would have raised an extra \$12 billion a year.

One third of large Australian companies paid no tax at all in 2020-21. All have an annual income of \$100 million or more.

By contrast Labor's multinational tax avoidance changes look set to raise a measly \$500 million a year.

Some had high hopes in what could be achieved in the new parliament. But it's already clear that Labor is going to deliver only the most minor efforts at change. We need a fight against the new government through strikes and mass protests if we're going to get anything more.

.....  
**One area where Labor is backing spending increases is the military with spending up this year to \$48.7 billion**

# Labor's IR bill is no solution for low-pay crisis

By David Glanz

LABOR'S PROPOSAL for multi-employer bargaining has the bosses worried. Tania Constable, head of the Minerals Council of Australia, said it would "unleash industrial chaos" on the mining industry.

Master Builders Association chief executive Denita Wawn said Labor's legislation "will force workplaces to cop deals they don't want and subject workers and business to industry-wide industrial action they don't support."

Union leaders, on the other hand, are greeting Labor's amendment to the Fair Work Act (the Secure Jobs, Better Pay bill) as a big step towards easing the cost-of-living crisis by letting workers bargain for decent wage increases.

ACTU secretary Sally McManus wrote that the bill "will ensure bargaining is simple, accessible, and fair for all Australian workers. It will also provide real rights to improve the lives of working women, like equal pay in women-dominated industries".

The reality, however, is much more complex.

Multi-employer bargaining is already in the Fair Work Act but no such agreement has been made since 2009. Labor is making it easier—but only for certain sectors of workers.

The new "supported bargaining" system is aimed at low-paid and feminised industries such as aged care, disability care and early childhood education and care.

There is no return to industry-wide agreements and strikes that used to be the case for workers in sectors such as manufacturing, universities or the public service before the introduction of enterprise bargaining by Labor in 1993.

In introducing the bill, Tony Burke, Minister for Employment, made it clear that even coordinated action across such sectors was ruled out. "The prohibition already in the act on pattern bargaining will remain."

Workers in supported bargaining will have the right to take protected industrial action but only by giving five days' notice (for enterprise agreements the requirement is three days).

The notes accompanying the bill make it clear that the notice period "is to provide employers adequate time to respond and put in place contingencies ahead of the planned industrial action".



And if talks break down the bill allows for the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to rule a dispute "intractable" and to impose an agreement.

## Stripping away rights

While McManus is emailing union members saying that the bill is a great step forward, she told the *Financial Review*: "The bill does not simplify or remove the red tape that makes the process of obtaining protected industrial action for workers unnecessarily long and difficult, in fact it adds more red tape."

Currently workers have to ballot to take protected industrial action. The bill states that ballot results will now be valid for just three months. If an employer drags out a dispute, workers may be forced to vote again, wasting time and resources.

Far from supporting low-paid workers, the bill waters down the better off overall test or BOOT that ensures that a deal cannot be worse than the underlying award that applies to each industry.

The notes state: "The bill will restore the original intent of the test as a global, rather than line-by-line, comparison against the modern award."

That means that the FWC will accept cuts to conditions in one section of an agreement on the notional basis that they are balanced out by gains in other clauses.

In addition, the BOOT will apply only to current workers. The notes

**Above: Multi-employer bargaining won't offer anything apart from in some low paid industries like childcare**

state: "For the majority of proposed enterprise agreements, the test will be applied in relation to actual workers, and patterns and types of work that are reasonably foreseeable."

As the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union warns, this could lead to employers striking deals and then introducing worse terms for workers employed later on.

The bill includes measures that workers will welcome, including making gender equity an aim of the legislation, creating enforceable rights to flexible work, limiting fixed-term contracts, banning pay secrecy and abolishing the anti-union Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC).

But even these clauses are riddled with exemptions designed to pacify employers. There are no fewer than nine reasons why the new limits on fixed-term contracts need not apply.

And while the ABCC will go, any evidence it collects to use against construction workers or their unions can still be used by the FWC.

The bill's title is a fraud. It is unlikely to create secure jobs or better pay for most workers. Any gains will be slow, limited and confined to specific industries.

If we want pay rises that at least match rampant inflation, it will take strike action to win them. And effective strike action involves breaking the industrial relations laws, not begging for their reform.

**There is no return to industry-wide agreements and strikes in sectors such as manufacturing, universities or the public service**



## Nurses in WA take on Labor government over staffing and pay

By Phil Chilton

WA NURSES have begun industrial action, after more than two years of the pandemic, crisis level ambulance ramping at hospitals, short-staffed shifts, serious issues of over-work, and a paltry pay offer from the state Labor government.

The Australian Nursing Federation (ANF) has imposed bans on working double shifts and working overtime, with plans to ramp up the industrial campaign, imposing bed closures and an indefinite strike in about seven weeks' time.

On 12 October nearly 2000 nurses attended a stop-work meeting at the Perth Convention Centre. On the agenda was a list of resolutions demanding pay rises of 5 per cent a year, plus top-up payments to account for inflation and an immediate \$3000 "cost of living" payment for public sector nurses and midwives.

Motions moved by members from the floor increased the claim to a 10 per cent a year pay rise and a \$4500 payment, as nurses argued they deserved more given the lack of staffing and ongoing strain on the state's health system. Nurses are also fighting for nurse-to-patient ratios equivalent to those in place in Victoria, Queensland and the ACT.

The motions in support of industrial action passed with uproarious cheers, leaving no doubt of the support for action.

ANF State Secretary Janet Reah said that nurses would not "continue to fill the gaps on the rosters created by a government that won't take reasonable steps to match the demand on the health services with the supply of nurses and midwives."

But as we went to press union officials were saying they were "close to agreement" with the government despite a below inflation pay offer nowhere near what members voted for.

WA Premier Mark McGowan is urging nurses to accept what he calls a "big win" on offer—a 3 per cent a year pay increase plus a \$3000 one off cost of living payment.

But nurses have rejected the offer, as well as McGowan's statement that he was hopeful ratios could be introduced within three years!

Workers across the public sector are demanding higher pay in the face of the surging cost of living. Community and Public Sector Union mem-



**Above: Nurses vote for industrial action at the mass meeting in October**

bers in the public service, school support staff and child protection staged lunchtime actions and walked out of work to rally in Perth on 26 October.

Even the WA Police Union said police were, "frustrated, annoyed and somewhat angry" as they are still without an offer, four months after their current agreement with the government expired. Police will launch a month of industrial action over their pay and conditions claim.

McGowan has been increasingly speaking of the need for fiscal conservatism in the face of global economic storm clouds. "Every major indicator is now saying there's going to be a

worldwide recession," McGowan told the WA Parliament. It's another indication state Labor governments will not deliver the pay rises and staffing needed across hospitals, schools and the public sector.

Workers are rightfully fed up. State and federal politicians can talk about keeping inflation in check but wages in Australia have been stagnant for nearly a decade while corporate profits keep growing.

Workers can't survive on good will and platitudes. Many are waking up to the fact that if they want pay and conditions to improve they will have to fight for them.

## Knauf workers show how to win

WORKERS AT the Knauf plant in Fishermans Bend in Melbourne have returned to work triumphant after almost two months of strikes and lockouts.

The 60 workers, members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining, Maritime and Energy Union (CFMMEU), were demanding a 6 per cent wage increase, 12 per cent super contributions from Knauf, double time on Saturdays and a halt to the expansion of labour hire.

They won almost everything, falling just short on pay.

Their first pay rise will be 5 per cent for the first year followed by 4 per cent each for the next three years, plus back pay from 1 July. Workers also won: all overtime at double

time, penalty rates up by 7.5 per cent and improved staffing levels.

They also won a laundry allowance which, as one worker wrote, is "important for a workforce which works all day in dust, often containing chemical additives which workers don't want to take home to their family".

The workers, who make stone products and plasterboard for the construction industry, marched back into work after 40 days of being locked out, welcomed by a guard of honour of other CFMMEU members.

Their willingness to fight shows that struggle pays. Other workers should learn from their example.

**David Glanz**

**Workers across the public sector are demanding higher pay in the face of the surging cost of living**



# Union tour pledges support for Gomeroi fight against gas project

By Penny Howard

A DELEGATION of 50 trade union officials and rank-and-file members visited Coonabarabran and the Pilliga Forest on 6 November, to hear first-hand from Gomeroi leaders about their struggle against the Santos Pilliga/Narrabri gas project.

The Pilliga is the largest remaining temperate forest in eastern Australia. Gomeroi women Suellyn Tighe and Deb Briggs shared with delegates some important cultural features of the landscape and the waterways, with the Pilliga acting as a vital recharge zone for the Great Artesian Basin. This is all being threatened by Santos' climate-wrecking plans to drill 850 coal-seam gas wells, which would also release 127 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent into the atmosphere.

Unions NSW Assistant Secretary Vanessa Seagrove, who helped lead the delegation, said, "this weekend has shown me first-hand how important this land is culturally but also what this would do to the environment. It cannot go ahead and we will continue to fight alongside the Gomeroi People for as long as it takes."

Gomeroi have a registered Native Title claim over the Pilliga. Long-term opposition to coal-seam gas was formalised in a vote of the Gomeroi Nation in March 2022, which rejected Santos' offer of compensation in exchange for Gomeroi consent.

Santos has filed four "Future Acts Determination Applications" (FADAs) in the Native Title Tribunal (NTT), seeking to proceed with the project despite Gomeroi opposition. An NTT hearing was held in April, but no decision has been issued. The NTT has only rejected three such FADAs in the past 30 years.

A multi-union media statement was issued following the delegation, pledging that if the NTT does not uphold Gomeroi rights, unions will support a fight that will stop Santos on the ground. Paul Keating, Sydney Branch Secretary of the MUA said:

"We have committed to ongoing solidarity and direct action, including blockades, involving our members and the entire trade union movement".

## Momentum

The delegation included nurses from Sydney and Coonabarabran, teachers' union representatives from across NSW, manufacturing and maintenance workers, maritime workers from



**Above: Unionists hear from Gomeroi women during the Pilliga tour**

Newcastle and Sydney and university staff. Significantly, blue collar unions with members working in the gas industry got behind the delegation, with representatives attending from the AMWU and active support from the ETU and the construction division of the CFMEU.

This raises the prospect of a union "green ban" being placed on the Santos development. The ETU have already pledged that none of their members will work on the site.

Gomeroi activists and supporters, including Workers for Climate Action in Sydney, have worked for more than two years to build support in the union movement.

Gomeroi men Raymond Weatherall and Ian Brown have spoken at May Day demonstrations and numerous union meetings.

MUA National Indigenous Officer Thomas Mayor attended an action conference in the Pilliga in March and pledged to build support across the movement. MUA delegate Natalie Wasley attended the Gomeroi Nation meeting that voted against any deal with Santos, handing out statements promising union backing if Gomeroi rejected Santos' offer.

The delegation came on the heels of an important vote at Unions NSW to reaffirm a motion condemning the court action by Santos to over-ride Gomeroi rights stating that:

"This kind of behaviour from mining companies has been repeated again and again over the course of colonisation of what is now known as Australia. This must stop now."

The motion also committed to "support the Gomeroi people will all means available to us". Instead of coal-seam gas, Unions NSW is calling for "sustainable employment and renewable energy development in the region, with appropriate public investment and industry planning".

The motion was originally passed by the Unions NSW Executive in April, but in November the AWU sought to have the Unions NSW Council overturn it. One hundred and fifty union reps turned up for the meeting and the AWU's motion failed 73 votes to 54. The Mining and Energy Union and the SDA supported the AWU in the vote.

The AWU argued that the gas supply and price crisis meant that more gas supplies were needed, but this was rejected by speakers from the AMWU and others, who pointed to huge gas exports and industry profits.

From the Gurindji walk-off in 1966, through to the campaign that stopped the nuclear waste dump on Aboriginal land in the NT in 2014, trade unions have been an important source of support for Aboriginal people fighting for rights to control their lands. Union power will also be crucial in the fight for a just transition, to meet the existential threats posed by the climate crisis.

We need to build on the momentum created through the powerful delegation, increase pressure on the Albanese government to reject the Santos project and prepare to mobilise if the Native Title Tribunal rules against Gomeroi rights.

.....  
**"We will continue to fight alongside the Gomeroi People for as long as it takes"**  
**— Unions NSW Assistant Secretary Vanessa Seagrove**

# Dan Andrews—progressive sheen with law and order agenda

By Lachlan Marshall

LABOR'S DANIEL Andrews is widely predicted to win the Victorian election on 26 November.

While Andrews has been tarnished by allegations of pork barrelling and misuse of public funds, Liberal leader Matthew Guy is no better. His chief of staff resigned when it was revealed he asked a billionaire donor to pay over \$100,000 to a company he ran. Guy himself held a notorious "lobster dinner" with a Liberal donor and alleged Mafia boss in 2017.

Guy's racist campaign against "African gangs" failed in 2018, but he is still peddling division. He has pledged to make it easier for religious schools to discriminate against LGBTIQ+ people and is also scaremongering about the families of Islamic State fighters being allowed to return to Victoria.

### Bringing back the SEC

Labor's announcement that it would bring back the State Electricity Commission (SEC) to build publicly-owned renewable power has been welcomed by the union and climate movements.

It promises to build 4.5 gigawatts of public renewable energy with a renewable energy target of 95 per cent by 2035. But the \$1 billion investment is only a fraction of the \$180 billion needed in coming decades.

And the new projects won't be fully public-owned. The government will have a "controlling interest" with the remaining investment coming from "like-minded entities" including super funds.

Labor is also promising the introduction of three and four-year-old kindergarten, a free public IVF service, cheaper public transport and a sick pay guarantee for casual workers in industries like hospitality, security, retail, disability and aged care, although this is only a two-year pilot.

But Victoria's claim to be "the most progressive state in the nation" leaves out some inconvenient facts.

The Andrews Labor government has imposed an insulting 1.5 per cent pay rise cap on public sector workers including teachers and nurses, meaning a hefty pay cut after inflation. This is even less than the 2.5 per cent under NSW's Liberal government.

New spending on hospitals won't mean much if nurses' pay is so low they are understaffed.



Above: Victoria's Labor Premier Daniel Andrews

Spending on social housing in Victoria is less than half that of NSW, and even less than smaller states like Queensland and WA. This has resulted in the waiting list increasing under the Labor government.

Andrews has announced a \$5.4 billion "Big Housing Build" of 12,000 homes over four years.

But Labor's plans won't reverse the historic decline in public housing. According to Sarah Toohey, chief executive of the Community Housing Industry Association, "To catch up to the national average of 4.5 per cent, we need to be building around 6000 units a year for the next 10 years."

Only \$300 million will go to public housing, with the rest for not-for-profit "community housing", where residents often pay higher rents, and have worse tenancy rights

### Law and order

Instead the Labor government has spent massively on the police and prisons. Since 2013 Victoria's spending on this has increased faster than that on health and education.

Authoritarian policing has typified Daniel Andrews' government, as seen in its enthusiasm for lockdowns and vaccine mandates. These could hurt Labor in outer-suburban working class electorates like Melton and Werribee.

Victoria Police is now bigger than NSW Police even though Victoria has a much smaller area and population.

Monique Hurley from the Human Rights Law Centre said that "Victoria is in the midst of a mass imprisonment

crisis," explaining that it "has some of Australia's most dangerous and discriminatory bail laws that are needlessly removing people from their families and funnelling them into prisons to be warehoused on remand."

Andrews introduced draconian bail laws after the Bourke Street killings in 2017, resulting in a sharp rise in the number of women, Indigenous and disabled people in prison.

The number of prisoners awaiting trial has increased by 143 per cent since 2014. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison tripled between 2010 and 2020.

The Victorian government also recently passed a law targeting protesters, increasing the penalty for disrupting logging to a maximum of 12 months' jail and a \$21,000 fine.

Many people will vote 1 Greens 2 Labor to show their support for better public services and housing. The Greens are expected to hold onto the inner city seats of Prahran, Melbourne and Brunswick, and hope to add new seats including Richmond. They are promising progressive measures such as building 200,000 public and affordable homes, paid for by taxing the banks.

Unions have wound down industrial action to fall behind Labor, with the teachers' union calling off strike plans earlier this year, accepting the 1.5 per cent pay rise—in contrast to NSW and WA, where public sector unions are striking for decent staffing and pay.

Winning more ambitious climate action and cost of living relief will require renewed protests and strikes.

.....  
**Since 2013  
Victoria's  
spending on  
police and  
prisons has  
increased  
faster than  
on health and  
education**

# Funding public health the alternative to lockdowns

**Lockdown**  
By Chip Le Grand  
Monash University  
Publishing, \$32.95

CHIP LE Grand's *Lockdown* is a fascinating look at the politics of COVID-19, focused on the experience of lockdown in Victoria. It damns health spending cuts and public health failures, the COVID Zero fallacy and the damage caused by lockdowns.

More importantly Le Grand argues that there was a third way between the false polarisation of lockdown and letting the virus rip—the case for public health. It's an argument that was sorely missing at the time, and welcome even if in hindsight.

Le Grand argues that “The degradation of public health in Victoria is a 30 year problem which began with the election of the Jeff Kennett government in 1992 ... the Victorian Health Department was over time reduced to a bureaucratic husk.”

In January 2020, before the pandemic broke, then Victoria Health Minister Jenny Mikakos tendered a confidential submission begging for more funds. It read “in its current state the health protection system does not have the necessary capacity or capabilities to prevent, respond, and protect against current or emerging threats”.

Le Grand explains “At the start of the pandemic, Victoria's Health Protection Branch—the division of the health department responsible for containing the spread of infectious diseases—employed one infection control consultant, and she worked part time. It had a total of nine public health officers, all based in the same office,



Police swarm on Melbourne's public housing towers to impose a hard lockdown

many on single year contracts. NSW by comparison had 15 public health units—teams of people—spread around the state”.

Le Grand is damning of the hard lockdown of public housing towers. He shows how health advice was tailored to suit the political decision to impose the “unprecedented” lockdown.

Under Victorian legislation only the Chief Health Officer or their delegates, including Deputy Chief Health Officer Annaliese van Diemen, had the power to enact lockdowns.

Premier Andrews had claimed “you can't argue with the science. You can't do anything but follow the best health advice”. But as Le Grand points out “In this instance, public health advice was retrofitted to a political decision already made. Journalists were on their way to the press conference before van Diemen had read the final orders.”

Annaliese van Diemen told the inquiry into the lockdown of the towers that the decision “wasn't

discussed with me” and she was given just minutes to read the legal orders and put her name to them.

Daniel Andrews' retort when questioned about human rights “It's not about human rights, it's about human life” is neatly dismissed by Le Grand as exactly the same line that Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte used to justify extrajudicial killings of drug dealers “Your concern is human rights, mine is human lives”.

## Quarantine failures

Hotel quarantine, he says, was doomed from the start. Figures show that for one in every 250 COVID cases, the virus leaked out. Premier Andrews rushed to blame staff, but Le Grand paints a different picture:

“Clare Febey one of bureaucrats told the inquiry [into hotel quarantine], that at the start of the pandemic the health department wanted to preserve its stocks of PPE. That's why people were told they only needed to wear masks when they couldn't keep their distance from

hotel staff.”

One guard told the inquiry “I didn't have a mask or PPE.... My friends who were guards would help travellers with luggage and share lifts with them when they arrived from the airport. They didn't have a mask or any other PPE either. We didn't know if any of the travellers had the virus, our subcontractor told us nothing”.

Le Grand concludes that when it became clear hotel quarantine had caused Melbourne's second wave “The only way for Daniel Andrews to politically recover was to take us back down to zero”.

By 2021 Le Grand claims Victoria had developed “world class track and trace, contact and case management systems” and “the data suggests that these systems, and a bit of good luck, rather than lockdowns were crucial factors in controlling the February and May outbreaks”. But the authorities still didn't trust their own systems and lockdowns continued.

Le Grand's look at alternatives to lockdown examines the experience of Tokyo. Its “world class health system” allowed every COVID case to be admitted to hospital, quarantined and treated with anti-virals.

Le Grand promotes its “soft restrictions” without fines or mandates, where people were simply encouraged to wear masks, and to go home rather than to bars, as leading to a greater sense of agency amongst the population. As a result, he writes “Tokyo has never entered lockdown, and its per capita death rate from COVID is lower than Victoria's”.

He also quotes David Nabarro WHO special envoy on COVID-19, “You keep the number of cases down by having really good surveillance, detection and isolation... lockdown... in my judgement, it was a failure of narrative, a failure of policy”.

Le Grand is no radical. Whilst he exposes some of the absurdity and hypocrisy of lockdown rules, he doesn't touch on their impact on social movements or the unions. We are still paying the price for the way this demobilised struggle.

He similarly has nothing to say about the kind of fight needed to improve a public health system that is still in crisis and remains under-resourced and starved of funds.

Nonetheless, it is refreshing to have the lie that there was no COVID safe alternative to lockdown demolished. Le Grand concludes “Daniel Andrews kept telling us there was no other way, but there was. You just had to look beyond our closed borders to find it”.

**Chris Breen**

# Iran protests still growing as regime fears worker revolt

By Adam Adelpour

PROTEST AND rebellion have swept Iran for almost two months since the murder of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini by the regime's notorious morality police, after her arrest for wearing her headscarf improperly.

The protests have rapidly become an open challenge to the authoritarian regime, calling directly for its overthrow.

As well as the leading slogan of "woman, life, freedom", popular chants raised during protests include "death to the dictator" and "neither shah, nor mullahs, I support the people". In early November University students in Tabriz chanted "with or without the hijab we're heading for revolution".

The 40th day since Mahsa Amini's death saw one of the biggest days of protest so far. In her home region of Kurdistan thousands defied state repression to march to the cemetery in Saqqez where she is buried. Security forces reportedly tried to shut off access to the cemetery but were unable to stop the tide of mourners.

Protests were reported across at least 45 cities. In Tehran there were protests in dozens of neighbourhoods. Videos posted on social media show many crowds in the streets in many cities and Tehran's bazaars shut down with protesters chanting "death to Khamenei", the country's Supreme Leader.

Footage appears to show protesters in the city of Tabriz using Molotov cocktails in response to police gunfire and hurling objects onto security forces from the roof of a building in Tehran's Sepahsalar Street shopping area.

University campuses have become a centre of the movement. In early November students in Tehran and other cities staged strikes despite the intensifying crackdown.

Videos posted on social media show students gathered in courtyards, corridors and roads on campuses chanting anti-regime slogans and holding signs demanding the release of imprisoned classmates.

At Sharif University in Tehran students broke sexist rules that prevent men and women eating together in the canteen.

Schools have also been a hotbed of rebellion with dozens of school children among those killed and injured



by regime security forces.

## Workers' strikes

Despite the heroism of the movement the regime remains powerful and has shown little sign of making concessions. Instead, it has intensified repression with hundreds being killed and up to 14,000 arrested.

Deepening the movement to involve widespread workers' action is essential if it is to withstand the repression and topple the government. During Iran's 1979 revolution, it was the power of oil workers' strikes to halt production that finished off the Shah's regime. Workers took control of the factories and took a leading role in the revolution.

In late October school teachers in the Kurdish province went on strike for two days against the government crackdown on protests.

Sections of oil workers in the south of Iran also launched strikes against the government in October. And there have been reports of strikes by tanker drivers, steel workers and tyre makers.

But workers' actions have so far been only on a limited scale, with protests overwhelmingly taking place in the streets and universities.

Amid high unemployment and extraordinary inflation, the protests are a lightning rod for wider discontent. Since Iran's government began a process of "opening up" to the market in the 1990s the country has seen price controls and subsidies abolished and waves of privatisation. The gap between rich and poor has grown.

**Above: An unveiled woman stands defiant as mourners head towards Aichi cemetery in Mahsa Amini's hometown, Saqqez, in Iran's Kurdistan province**

According to the BBC the cost of goods and services has increased by 1135 per cent over the past decade. In just one month this year, food prices jumped 26 per cent. Inflation is projected to reach 47 per cent by March. Against this dire economic backdrop, the Iranian government is terrified of the working class being drawn behind the protests. According to *Foreign Policy* magazine, in October management at Haft Tappeh Sugarcane, a large state-owned firm, were urged to "do anything to prevent workers' protests."

One day before a planned protest, management suddenly agreed to pay out months of delayed wages. More recently, the Persian Gulf Mining and Metal Industries Special Economic Zone called on major employers in Hormozgan province to pay wage arrears "in order to prevent workplace grievances that might become a reason for participating in protests."

After strikes broke out in the petrochemical sector the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane Company Workers' Union issued a statement in solidarity with the protests, a section of it reads:

"On the day of victory, the whole world will take off their hats in front of you—you gave everyone a lesson in standing up and resisting.

"Long live the union and class solidarity of the workers for liberation!

"Towards a nationwide strike in the services and production sectors!" This is the kind of action necessary to bring down the regime.

**Workers' actions have so far been only on a limited scale, with protests mainly in the streets and universities**



## World heads for climate disaster as COP27 brings more broken promises

By Caitlin Doyle

THE WORLD is on a “highway to hell”, the UN’s Antonio Guterres warned as world leaders began gathering this month at the COP27 climate talks in Egypt.

“Greenhouse gas emissions keep growing. Global temperatures keep rising. And our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible,” he said.

But anyone concerned about the climate catastrophes already unfolding should not hold their breath for any serious progress from the talks.

Since the first COP in 1995, global emissions have increased by 55 per cent. Last year’s COP26 summit was promoted as the one that would finally fix the problem—but it failed.

Instead coal use has surged across Europe as the war in Ukraine leads to a scramble to replace the gas previously supplied by Russia.

At the 2015 climate talks in Paris, 193 states, plus the EU, agreed to enact plans to limit global warming to “well below” two degrees and “ideally” below 1.5 degrees. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says that 1.5 degrees is the maximum average global temperature increase if the world is to avoid irreversible and catastrophic climate change.

But as of this month, 167 of the Paris Accord signatories had still not adopted emissions reduction targets to keep warming below two degrees. In fact, according to the UN Climate Change Commission, current commitments will increase emissions by 10.6 per cent by 2030, compared to 2010 levels.

This will mean a horrifying 2.5 degrees of warming by the end of the century.

Australia is one of only four countries that have increased their emissions reduction targets since COP26 last year.

Yet the Albanese government’s target of 43 per cent by 2030 is still woefully inadequate. It relies on a dodgy emissions trading scheme that effectively allows polluting companies to buy their way out of reducing emissions. And Albanese is supporting a series of new fossil fuel projects, like the Scarborough gas project in WA and Middle Arm gas hub in the NT, that will make it nearly impossible



for the government to meet its own target.

### The Global South

A major focus of COP27 is the climate aid funding wealthy nations promised for the Global South. Desperate appeals in recent years from the leaders of the worst affected countries, such as Tonga and Kenya, have been all but ignored.

The \$US100 billion a year pledged at Copenhagen in 2015 has never been delivered, despite climate disasters in the South becoming more frequent and more severe.

East Africa is suffering a devastating drought, with 22 million people across Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya at risk of starvation. Record-breaking floods this year left one third of Pakistan under water.

But Oxfam has argued that after factoring in “dishonest and misleading accounting” climate aid from wealthy nations amounted to only \$21-24 billion in 2020. And while US President Joe Biden last year promised \$11.4 billion before 2024, the US Congress approved just \$1 billion this year.

### Greenwashing dictatorship

Egypt’s military dictator Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who enjoys military and economic support from the West and Israel, is using the conference to try to greenwash his murderous regime.

COP27 is being held in Sharm El-Sheikh, a resort town on the Red Sea that is surrounded by a three-metre-high concrete wall designed to keep ordinary Egyptians and any protesters

**Above: Protests at the COP26 climate summit last year**

far away from proceedings. Participants at the conference are subject to intense surveillance by Egyptian intelligence and local NGOs and civil society representatives are forbidden to speak about the human rights abuses and environmental destruction carried out by the government.

Official promotions for the event depict cheerful-looking Egyptian men drinking from reusable straws and driving electric cars to the beach, an image wildly out of step with the lives of millions of impoverished Egyptians. Egyptian democracy activists have called on the climate justice movement to boycott the conference.

Around 60,000 political prisoners are still behind bars following the 2011 revolution and more recent protests. Since El Sisi’s military coup in 2013, his regime has carried out torture, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances on a massive scale.

One imprisoned activist, Alaa Abd El-Fattah, is on the brink of death after being on hunger strike for six months. Despite also holding British citizenship and a high-profile international campaign, the UK government has done nothing to secure his release.

COP27 is unlikely to offer anything in the way of real change. The most we can expect is more platitudes from global leaders and more of what Greta Thunberg calls “blah blah blah”.

It is going to take mass campaigns in Australia and across the world to force a transition away from fossil fuels and win justice for the millions of people threatened by the consequences of climate change.

**A major focus of COP27 is the climate aid funding wealthy nations promised for the Global South**

# AUSTRALIA'S OTHER OFFSHORE HELL

## BAN IMPOSES TORTURE ON REFUGEES IN INDONESIA

**Ian Rintoul** recently returned from a refugee movement fact-finding trip to Indonesia. He reports on the plight of refugees trapped there by Australian government policy

OPERATION SOVEREIGN Borders (OSB) began on 18 September 2013 shortly after the election of the Tony Abbott government. OSB is best known for the navy patrols to the north of Australia, and for turning back boats of asylum-seekers. Asylum-seekers who made it to Australian territorial waters were expelled to detention on Manus Island or Nauru.

A key component of OSB was the Regional Deterrence Framework, a program of disruption that was aimed at other countries, particularly Indonesia, to prevent boats carrying asylum-seekers leaving for Australia.

Australia launched a \$240 million program of paid village informers, paying bounties for information that led to arrests, boosting the numbers of Federal Police on the ground and even a boat buy-back scheme.

In 2013 and 2014, Australian immigration officials along with the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) toured Indonesia telling asylum-seekers if they didn't take a boat, they would be processed by UNHCR and resettled in Australia.

Many believed them, registered with UNHCR and waited for the promised resettlement.

One Afghan refugee who arrived in Indonesia in 2013 as a 17-year-old unaccompanied minor told Solidarity: "We were betrayed. I was rejected by Australia in 2015. My family is still in Pakistan." Many others still have not been referred to Australia for resettlement.

In November 2014, Scott Morrison, then Minister for Immigration, extended the deterrence measures of OSB, announcing that Australia would not accept any refugees who applied through the UNHCR for resettlement after 1 July 2014.

Morrison said he was "taking the sugar off the table" and that the ban "is designed to stop people flowing into Indonesia". The ban has had a devastating effect.

Until then, Indonesia had been seen as a transit country for asylum-seekers, somewhere they might be temporarily located before moving to a country of permanent protection, usually Australia.

As a result of Morrison's 2014 ban, Australia began warehousing refugees and asylum-seekers in Indonesia—and Indonesia became as integral a part of Australia offshore regime as Manus Island and Nauru.

### Poverty and discrimination

The conditions for refugees being held in Indonesia have not received anything like the attention or scrutiny that has been applied to the conditions on Manus and Nauru.

Australia's control over refugees and asylum-seekers in Indonesia has been outsourced to the UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), with Australia funding most of the two organisations' operations in Indonesia.

There are now about 14,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Indonesia. Most have been there for at least eight years and many for ten years (and more), trapped by Australia's ban.

Refugees are not allowed to work, study, get a driver's licence or get married.

While primary age children are officially allowed to go to Indonesian schools, in practice language barriers, discrimination (religious and otherwise) and the lack of official recognition means that most children are excluded from school.

Every week hundreds of refugees

**Refugees are not allowed to work, study, get a driver's licence or get married**

in Makassar, Medan, Surabaya and other cities across Indonesia hold protests outside UNHCR offices, demanding resettlement. In Makassar, they sometimes march from the UNHCR to the Australian consulate demanding Australia lift its resettlement ban.

In 2018, refugees and asylum-seekers began to be released from shocking detention centres (also Australian-funded). But the conditions they are now being held in are truly appalling—decrepit, overcrowded and often unhygienic.

They receive a weekly allowance that is well below the Indonesian poverty line and that has been badly cut in real terms by inflation.

The adult allowance is 1,250,000 rupiah (about \$125) a month. It has not increased for at least a decade. In Makassar in 2012, a chicken cost 15,000 rupiah; it now costs 70,000 rupiah. In the past four years a kilo of meat has increased from 80,000 to 130,000 rupiah; milk has gone from 11,000 to 20,000; two litres of cooking oil from 22,000 to 40,000; and disposable nappies from 60,000 to 100,000. A basic bus fare in Makassar has doubled from 5000 to 10,000.

IOM claims that the allowance is set by Australia. But in 2014, IOM arbitrarily decreed that adult children of refugee couples would get only the child allowance of 500,000 rupiah (about \$50) a month, driving families further into poverty.

IOM restrictions on funding medical treatment is, if anything, worse than IHMS, which operates in Australia's offshore and onshore detention.

People die waiting for medical attention, including one notorious case where a refugee bled to death in a hospital emergency room while the

hospital waited to see if IOM would fund his treatment.

MRIs and CAT scans are routinely refused. Needed dental treatment is declined. Now, refugees can visit a doctor only once a week—anything more has to be paid by themselves. And IOM will no longer pay more than 50,000 rupiah (about \$5) for prescribed medicine.

Australian funding cuts have seriously added to refugees' dire poverty. Refugees who arrived in Indonesia after March 2018 get no allowance at all and, worse, no IOM accommodation.

Afghan wives and children who started to arrive in Indonesia from 2018 to join their husbands and fathers are perhaps the biggest group denied accommodation.

At least 25 families in Makassar are unsupported. One Afghan family in Jakarta of two parents and six children is receiving just one adult allowance of 1,250,000 rupiah. The family lives in a derelict military building in Kalideres (near the infamous detention centre known by the same name) with about 150 other Afghan and Pakistani refugees.

Two women have given birth in Kalideres because as unsupported refugees they are denied medical assistance.

In most accommodation there is a curfew. Refugees are not allowed to travel outside their designated city. They can be arrested and put into detention centres, usually needing to bribe immigration officers to be released.

The fact that refugees cannot lawfully drive or ride motorcycles makes them vulnerable to police harassment for bribes. Refugees are required to report to Indonesia immigration each month. Failure to report for three months can see refugees arrested and detained.

## Resettlement

UNHCR has stopped interviewing asylum-seeker arrivals to assess their refugee claims, adding to the despair. UNHCR dismisses criticisms by insisting that Indonesian law does not distinguish between refugees and asylum-seekers. But being in limbo adds to the uncertainty—without recognition as a refugee, there is no hope of resettlement anywhere.

The despair is taking a terrible toll on refugees' mental health. There have been 17 suicides since 2018 and many other suicide attempts in IOM accommodation blocks. And the "resignation syndrome" that emerged



**Above: Refugees protest outside the UNHCR offices in Makassar, 24 October 2022**

because of prolonged detention on Nauru and PNG is also rife in Indonesia, with high levels of medication and refugees unable to come out of their rooms.

In 2020 only 403 UNHCR refugees were resettled to a third country from Indonesia and just 457 in 2021. Just 69 were resettled in February 2022.

Although Morrison said that UNHCR refugees registered before his arbitrary cut-off of July 2014 were eligible for resettlement in Australia, there are more than 1000 of them still waiting in Indonesia after more than eight years.

It is part of Morrison's shocking record on refugees that he cut the humanitarian intake from 18,750 to 13,750 in 2020, having failed to meet the annual target since 2019 by over 14,000 places. Australia could easily make up part of Morrison's failure by taking all those refugees currently in Indonesia.

As one refugee who arrived in Indonesia as a 16-year-old in 2012 told Solidarity: "Australia is perfectly capable of taking all refugees from Indonesia. We are not a big number."

But the only commitment that Labor has made regarding refugees in Indonesia is to continue Morrison's policy of processing refugees registered before July 2014.

Labor is committed to raising the humanitarian quota to 27,000: why is it waiting?

There are many issues that need to be addressed. UNHCR will not refer refugees who are married to Indonesians to be resettled, but the

refugees cannot work in Indonesia. Unstated priorities look like discrimination: how else do you explain that no Rohingya refugees have been resettled to Australia since 2012 and that African refugees who arrived before July 2014 have been told by UNHCR that Australia will not accept refugees from Sudan and Somalia.

Inexplicably, scores, possibly hundreds, of refugees who arrived before July 2014 (including some who worked for the US and Australian defence forces in Afghanistan) have been referred to Australia, only to be rejected. Many look to be victims of a policy to reject UNHCR refugees from Indonesia even before it was formally announced in November 2014.

The ban has created a mass of anomalies. One Afghan refugee in Cisarua travelled to Indonesia in the hope of joining her husband, who had travelled by boat to Australia before 2013 and is now an Australian citizen. She has been denied resettlement but, as an Australian citizen, her husband has been able to visit his wife in Indonesia. The couple now have four Australian citizen children.

Australia's ban on accepting refugees from Indonesia has to go. The warehousing of refugees in Indonesia is as much a part of Australia's border protection regime as boat turnbacks and offshore detention in Nauru. The refugee movement has raised the issue of Morrison's ban since he imposed it in 2014.

Now, along with ending mandatory and offshore detention, the movement needs to demand that Labor ends the ban and brings the refugees here.

# US THREATENING WAR OVER TAIWAN IN CHINA SHOWDOWN

Seeking the backing of the US puts Taiwan in the middle of the clash between superpower rivals—with potentially devastating consequences writes **Phil Griffiths**

THE US, backed by Australia, is moving recklessly towards war over Taiwan, a war that would be catastrophic for the people of Taiwan, the people of China, and the world as a whole.

In early August, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, made a provocative visit to Taiwan. China responded with the most aggressive live-fire military exercises ever seen around the island. China also broke off regular contacts with American officials over military concerns, climate change, and other important issues.

In October, at the Chinese Communist Party's 20th Congress, Xi Jinping reiterated the government's determination to reunite with Taiwan, and its ultimate willingness to use force.

The US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, responded by claiming (without any evidence) that China planned a "much faster timeline" for taking over Taiwan far sooner than the US had previously believed.

The head of the US Navy, Admiral Mike Gilday, then declared that all the efforts of the US Navy were being bent towards being ready to "fight tonight"; whereas the US had been planning for war over Taiwan around 2027, "in my mind that has to be a 2022 window, or potentially a 2023 window".

More than ever we need to understand the issues involved over Taiwan, because both Coalition and Labor governments have made it absolutely clear that the Australia will be involved in any war. They want to make sure Australia's imperialist interests in the Pacific and Asia are maintained, including their ability to push back on China's influence in the region.

## Origins of the Taiwan problem

When Japan was defeated in the Second World War it was forced to surren-

der formerly conquered territories.

Taiwan became part of the Republic of China, which was run by one of the most brutal and corrupt dictatorships of the 20th century, the Kuomintang (KMT, Nationalist party) led by Chiang Kai-Shek.

The KMT had spent most of the war organising extermination drives against communists rather than resisting the Japanese, hoping that a victory of the US and its allies would keep them in power.

But when the Communist Party won the civil war in 1949, the KMT government and military (around two million people), retreated to the island of Taiwan. They were not welcome there. The KMT had already put the island under martial law and murdered between 18,000 and 28,000 people (from a population smaller than Melbourne's today) in response to a popular uprising. This "White Terror" lasted 38 years.

For the next 30 years, the US military protected Chiang's dictatorship. Without this, there would have been no Taiwanese regime and no division of China.

When the United Nations was founded in 1944, China was made a permanent member of the Security Council. Despite its defeat in 1949, the pro-US KMT was allowed to continue to represent China. It declared that there was only "one China", and that this rump dictatorship in Taiwan was supposedly China's legitimate government, a fiction supported by the US and its allies, including Australia.

In October 1971, the situation dramatically changed. The UN voted for China to be represented by the People's Republic of China (PRC). With both the US and China concerned about a Russian military threat, US President Richard Nixon

**Taiwan's physical location is strategically important to both Chinese and American imperialism**

visited China in 1972. The United States agreed to recognise the PRC as "China", shift its embassy to Beijing and withdraw all military forces from Taiwan. But its military support continued, via the Taiwan Relations Act.

The US decision to recognise the PRC represented a crisis for the Taiwan dictatorship. The mainland "communist threat" they had used to justify dictatorship was now recognised by even the US as the legitimate Chinese government.

The regime decided to reform rather than face revolt. Martial law was ended in 1987 and the first democratic elections held in 1996. The economy was liberalised and Taiwanese businesses allowed to invest overseas. Firms such as Foxconn (which assembles iPhones) flooded into the mainland, making vast profits exploiting low-paid workers.

Elements of the Taiwanese political elite, influential in the KMT, moved from dreams of invading China and crushing the communist government to long-term coexistence on the current basis, or even eventual reunification.

One of the new political parties, the Democratic People's Party (DPP) became the nationalist party opposed to closer integration with China, looking to American imperialism as a supposed shield against military and economic pressure from the PRC.

This growth of independence politics in Taiwan in turn alarmed the PRC, and it sanctioned and threatened pro-independence politicians and activists. Xi Jinping's crushing of the Hong Kong democracy movement in 2020 further strengthened the DPP.

Taiwanese official politics is now primarily divided on the issue of relations with the PRC. Working class interests have been largely subordinated.

At the same time as DPP anti-PRC nationalism was gaining ground in



Taiwan, the American government was becoming alarmed at the growth of China's economy and military power.

Membership of the World Trade Organisation from 2001 gave Chinese capitalists access to global markets, and the Chinese government welcomed foreign capital and technology. China's economy boomed.

In 2001 the US economy produced eight times as much as China; in 2011 it was only twice as much; and in 2021 it was just 1.3 times. China is now the world's largest manufacturing nation, producing around 30 per cent of global output, nearly double the US share at 17 per cent. This has allowed China to dramatically expand its military capacity.

As China rose as an economic power, US President Obama responded with his "Pivot to Asia" in 2012, then Trump with his trade war. Biden has gone way further.

Alongside a massive escalation in its military activities in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Straits, the US has launched all-out war on China's attempt to produce more advanced semiconductors such as those used in areas like Artificial Intelligence and advanced weaponry.

The US has put bans on any US citizen or company being involved in any way in China's advanced chip-making. It is spending over \$50 billion on subsidies for chip makers to set up fabrication in the US. Biden is determined to force as many countries and businesses as possible to choose involvement with the American-led capitalism rather than China.

The rivalry between the US and China shows how intimately capitalist economic and military competition is linked together.

Because China's military is still weaker than that of the US, and less technologically advanced, there is an advantage for the US in bringing on a crisis sooner rather than later because China is closing the gap. That's why the anti-China rhetoric and government policies have become so fevered in the past four years.

### What now for Taiwan?

This is the context for the current dispute over Taiwan. We've seen an endless procession of American politicians visiting Taiwan to express their "solidarity" with the Taiwanese people, and their "vibrant democracy". This is gut-wrenching hypocrisy.

The American ruling class has never sent its troops abroad to fight for democracy; it's only ever been about their profits, their investments, and the



**Above: US troops conduct war games exercises near Taiwan**

ability of their military to dominate. During the Cold War, the US backed brutal dictators across Asia: Park in South Korea, Marcos in the Philippines, Suharto in Indonesia, as well as Taiwan's Chiang. In Indo-China, they supported France's war to retain control of its colonies, and when France was defeated, sent over half a million troops into South Vietnam to prop up a pro-western dictatorship.

Despite this, many people feel that Taiwan has a right to look to the US to protect its independence and "democracy".

If it were just a question of China and Taiwan, there would be no issue. The Uighurs of Xinjiang have a right to independence from the tyranny of the PRC, as do the people of Tibet.

Taiwan is different because its physical location is strategically important to both Chinese and American imperialism. It is one of a long series of islands, mostly controlled by Japan, and US bases in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and the Pacific that give the US the ability to control sea traffic to and from China's entire coastline.

US access to Taiwan has always presented a military threat to the PRC, while "reunification" is central to the Chinese Communist Party's nationalist ideology, one of the few elements of their propaganda that has widespread support.

While Taiwan today operates independently from the Chinese regime, any formal declaration of independence seeking recognition from other states would be a provocation to force China to either back down or attack, and provide an excuse for the US to escalate its aggressive military stance against China.

No war that followed would be a war for democracy. The world would face the spectre of nuclear annihilation.

The situation for the people of Taiwan is awful. But allying with US imperialism is no solution.

Think about the issue from the standpoint of the people of the Japanese-controlled island of Okinawa, who have had to suffer the trauma of living with 31 US military bases on their island for decades. Doesn't Taiwan relying on the US mean supporting the presence of those bases? They would be at the centre of any US military action against China. What does it mean for the people of Guam, or Palau, or the Federated States of Micronesia, whose societies have been taken over by the US military, so that it can dominate the Pacific?

The only way forward—in Taiwan and Australia—is to challenge the imperialist rivalry that is driving the world towards war.

First and foremost that means challenging the great power supported by your own ruling class.

And it means strengthening the working class movement as the only force that has the power to ultimately destroy imperialism (and the capitalist system that drives it).

In Australia, the new Labor government is banging the drums of war as loudly as the Liberals did. Socialists need to oppose any war with China and fight against our own government's role bolstering US imperialism and its plans to dramatic expand Australian militarism.

Immediately this means fighting Labor's appalling decision to invite American B52 bombers to be stationed in the Northern Territory and campaigning against the AUKUS agreement to buy nuclear powered submarines.

# SHOULD WE BLOW UP PIPELINES?

## CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, WORKERS AND THE CLIMATE MOVEMENT

Andreas Malm's provocative book *How to blow up a pipeline* argues that the climate movement needs to escalate. But is no help on how to do so, argues **James Supple**

IN 1995 the first COP summit in Berlin saw world leaders gather to discuss what to do about climate change. Twenty-seven years on, total global emissions have risen by 55 per cent and are still climbing.

Our rulers have been “constitutionally incapable of responding to the catastrophe”, Andreas Malm points out in his new book *How to blow up a pipeline*.

Malm is a leading radical voice in the climate movement and author of *Fossil Capital*, which traces how capitalists became addicted to fossil fuels during the industrial revolution. He has aroused enough anger from the rich and powerful to be banned recently from making a speech at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

Despite ever more terrifying warnings about the shrinking prospects of avoiding catastrophe—both from science and from the unprecedented floods and fires as far north as the Arctic—action continues at only at a snail's pace.

And despite waves of protest, most recently through the global student strikes inspired by Greta Thunberg, the climate movement is still not powerful enough to force the action needed. So, Malm asks, how does the movement escalate?

This need has driven the emergence both of Extinction Rebellion (XR) and more recent groups like Fireproof Australia and Blockade Australia, who argue the movement needs to get more disruptive.

Similarly, in the UK a new group called Just Stop Oil has organised blockades of oil terminals and roads. Van Gogh's Sunflowers and other famous paintings have been smeared with soup and mashed potatoes as activists adopt shock tactics in despera-

tion at the failure on climate action.

The XR model, Malm says, is based on non-violent direct action, from blocking roads to actions at coal power stations, as the key to winning climate action. Their actions use a “civil resistance” model, which claims that non-violent action on a large enough scale can produce the political pressure and moral force to make governments give in.

### **Violence**

Malm's complaint is that the climate movement studiously avoids “anything that could be classified as violence”. Chief culprits, in his view, are XR and its founders in the UK, but also activists like Bill McKibben of climate NGO 350.org in the US, who have adopted pacifism as a principle.

XR was a great step forward in bringing thousands of people into direct action protests. But, as Malm points out, some of its ideas are a barrier to the further growth of the movement, in particular its naivety about police.

XR's founders claimed that police could be won over through moral appeals. “Rebels,” Malm writes, “are instructed to offer flowers to the police” and to “actively seek to get arrested”.

His book very effectively skewers the idea that pacifism and non-violent action like this alone can convince governments and the fossil fuel corporations to admit defeat.

He shows how even the movements that XR has cited as successful examples of non-violent resistance actually involved significant violence. The end of slavery in the Americas came through individual and collective acts of violent resistance by Black slaves themselves, a slave

.....  
**He shows how even the movements that XR has cited actually involved significant violence**

---

uprising and revolution in Haiti and the US civil war. The suffragettes in Britain smashed windows, torched letterboxes and planted bombs.

Gandhi, who insisted his followers remain non-violent, enlisted for the British in the Boer War and then enthusiastically recruited soldiers for the Empire in the First World War.

Nor is it true that Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign was primarily responsible for winning Indian independence. The immediate period before independence saw a tidal wave of mass protests and riots, including the burning down of police stations. Military units staged mutinies against British authority, much to Gandhi's horror.

So if violence has been an unavoidable part of winning radical change in the past, Malm asks, isn't the scale of the climate emergency enough to justify targeted sabotage of fossil fuel installations? When, he asks, “do we start physically attacking the things that consume our planet and destroy them”?

But his argument is more a provocation than a serious proposal.

Malm is right to argue that pacifism and non-violence are not enough to win the sweeping social change needed to uproot fossil fuelled capitalism. But this is not because sabotage or violent actions are usually strategic or effective. It is because the rich and powerful will resort to violence through unleashing the police and the military against any mass movement that poses a threat to their wealth.

Socialists recognise the right of the oppressed to defend themselves against such violent assault from the powers that be—such as the Black activists in the US who organised self-defence against white racists dur-

ing the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

We support the radicalism and militancy that was necessary to win Black civil rights in the US, the end of South African apartheid, national liberation and many other struggles.

The trouble is, for all his radicalism, Malm doesn't really have an alternative to the tactics of civil disobedience. He ends the book with praise of the Climate Camp movement in Europe—a convergence protest where climate activists gather for several days of direct action protests aimed at disrupting coal mines or coal power stations.

Civil disobedience protests like this can play an important role in stepping up the pressure on fossil fuel corporations and the governments backing them, when they are on a larger, mass scale involving thousands of people.

Some of the early XR actions in Britain and Australia, before the pandemic pushed the climate movement off the streets, did involve thousands.

Just as importantly, they helped to bring more people into active involvement and contributed to strengthening the wider climate movement.

But the recent actions targeting art galleries and disrupting traffic have involved much smaller numbers of activists. This means taking part almost inevitably leads to arrest. And without a growing climate movement that could defend activists against police repression, such actions are likely to demoralise those involved and fritter out.

## Secret

Sabotaging equipment at coal mines or oil companies is only a more militant version of this kind of direct action. Of necessity, it would have to involve very small groups of activists, with dedicated training and organised in secret.

Anyone involved in blowing up a pipeline would likely face jail time and repression on a level that would make the anti-protest laws of today seem mild.

The way forward for the movement is not through adopting more and more militant direct action tactics. This approach led directly to the emergence of a series of left-wing terrorist groups in the late 1970s, such as the Weather Underground in the US, who bombed government buildings and banks in a misguided effort to oppose US imperialism and the Vietnam War. This was a disaster and left those involved facing decades on the run



from police.

Worse, those who look simply to either civil disobedience or terrorism to win change rely on an essentially reformist political strategy, one that looks to small numbers acting from the top down. On their own, such actions will never be enough to fundamentally transform society—at best they are part of simply pressuring existing governments and states over their demands.

Climate catastrophe and environmental destruction are hardwired into the capitalist system. Ending the threat to the planet requires more than action within the existing system.

## Strike

Serious escalation has to involve action by the organised working class. Groups of hundreds or thousands of activists can usually shut down fossil fuel operations for only a few hours. But workers' strike action has the potential power to shut down production across the whole of society.

Workers' action has been a feature of some of the most powerful social movements in Australian history.

The high point of the movement against the Vietnam War were the Moratoriums, where unions took strike action to join giant marches. The NSW Builders Labourers Federation organised industrial action through Green Bans in the 1970s that saved parkland and working class communities from development. And industrial bans on transporting uranium played a key role in the

**Above: Malm proposes a campaign of targeted sabotage of pipelines and fossil fuel infrastructure**

movement against uranium mining.

Workers' power at the point of production has also been central to the great revolutions and upheavals of the 20th and 21st century—from the French May 1968 events to Iran in 1979, Russia in 1917 and the Egyptian revolution of 2011.

The working class has the power not just to push existing governments and rulers to grant reforms but to revolutionise society through taking production and economic power out of the hands of the billionaires and putting them under democratic control. A socialist society run under workers' power could take the kind of radical action on cutting carbon emissions on which capitalist governments have failed.

Australia is nowhere near this kind of revolutionary upheaval. But if the climate movement is to succeed it needs to draw in the power of unions and organised workers. That means seeking to broaden the movement to draw wider layers of unionists and the working class into action—both through mass protests as well as disruptive action.

And it means taking working class issues around climate change seriously—including jobs, a just transition for fossil fuel workers, power bills and the cost of living.

It is going to take a movement actively involving working class people in their millions to win the kind of the action we need—and challenge the capitalist system that stands in the way.

# IT'S NOT COMPLICATED PERMANENT VISAS NOW

By Ian Rintoul

WHEN ASKED on radio about Labor's pre-election promise to grant refugee permanent visas, Home Affairs Minister Claire O'Neil tried to avoid the question, "We have not executed on the policy framework essentially to make that happen yet." When asked why not, O'Neil replied, "It's a complicated exercise."

But it's not complicated. What's lacking is political will. O'Neil has recently declared that the migration system is broken, telling *The Age* that, "We've ended up with a system where there's massive visa queues and where the people who actually legitimately want to use the system can't properly use it."

She could have been talking about refugee visas—but she wasn't. O'Neil is concerned that skilled migrants are waiting two years to get an answer from Home Affairs. They should not be waiting so long—but refugees who have been in Australia for ten years are still waiting for Labor to make good on its promise to grant them permanent visas.

And there are refugees in Indonesia who were told they had been accepted by Australia in 2018 but have heard nothing more for almost five years.

No amount of concern about skilled migration or rorts in the migration system can hide the fact that Labor is dragging its feet on its promise to grant permanent visas. Temporary visas have denied proper work and study to thousands of people.

When it suited Labor, it took less than three months for the Biloela Tamil family to be granted permanent visas by Ministerial intervention.

Ministerial intervention could similarly be used to grant permanent visas to all the 31,000 refugees and asylum seekers on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs), Safe Haven Enterprise Visas, bridging or expired visas (including 2000 babies born in Australia).



**Above: Refugees have joined protests at parliament house in Canberra and in other cities in large numbers to call for permanent visas**

Many of those on bridging or expired visas have no income support, while Labor sits on its hands. Two thousand asylum seekers are still waiting for a decision. Despite Labor's promise to grant permanent visas, refugees are still having to apply for another temporary visa when their TPV expires. Some have been left waiting for months. Refugees on TPVs are still being denied travel rights.

It's now almost six months since Labor was elected, and the anger is growing.

Medevac refugees, and others from Nauru and PNG, most of whom are on six month bridging visas, were outraged and distressed when they recently received a threatening letter

from Home Affairs insisting they would never be permanently settled in Australia and giving them 14 days to notify the department of their "third country resettlement plans".

Every day's delay in granting permanent visas adds to their misery.

## Unfair system

Around 10,000 asylum seekers have had their refugee claims rejected under the under the fast track system introduced by the Morrison government in 2014. There are thousands of Bangladeshis, Iraqis, Iranians, Tamils and Afghans who were rejected by an unfair system and need permanent visas.

Iranians in open defiance of their repressive government are being shot on the streets in cities across Iran, yet Iranian asylum seekers are not treated with the same generosity as the Ukrainians fleeing the war in their country. Nor are Australia's borders as open to Afghans as they are to Ukrainians.

Labor's promise on permanent visas for those on TPVs and SHEVs and to scrap the fast track system is almost the only policy difference between Labor and the Coalition. Anthony Albanese's election night pledge of "No one held back and no one left behind" was never meant to apply to refugees.

To undo the legacy of 20 years of bi-partisan support for mandatory and offshore detention, we need more than to hold Labor to its election promises; that's just the start.

The refugees and asylum seekers still being held in PNG and Nauru must be brought to Australia. And Morrison's ban on accepting UNHCR refugees from Indonesia has to go (read more on page 14).

More than 1500 refugees protested in Canberra during the September sitting of the Federal Parliament. Since then, rallies in Sydney and Melbourne have kept up the momentum. Another Canberra Convergence demanding permanent visas for all will see refugees from across Australia demonstrating at parliament house on 29 November.

# Solidarity