



# The war spreads – with Australia involved

Marcus Browning

Having reduced Gaza and the long-suffering Palestinian people to a state of ruin and desolation, the US-Israeli axis of destruction has now turned its murderous gaze and intent towards Iran – with Donald Trump threatening to “bring them back to the stone ages, where they belong.”

During a press conference at the White House on 6 April, the US president claimed that, “The entire country [Iran] can be taken out in one night, and that night might be tomorrow night.”

Trump also threatened that “a whole civilisation will die,” if Iran didn’t make an acceptable deal.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said that the US had carried out the largest volume of strikes against Iran since the first day of “Operation Epic Fury.” He further warned that the US military would “hit even harder,” signalling a major escalation in the conflict.

Despite talk of “freeing” the Iranian people, the US delusion that bombing would lead to an uprising and the installation of a pro-US puppet regime in Tehran was always a fairytale. Attacking schools, universities, and hospitals helps with the objective of destroying a country, not the liberation of its people. The only objective of such operations is to ensure that Iran is rendered a failed state and sent back to the pre-industrial age.

This is a war for US domination of the Middle East and the oil trade. Further wars against other nations are planned.

### WAR SPREADS

At time of writing, peace talks held in Pakistan have failed. The



Rally against the war in the Middle East, 29 March (Palm Sunday), Boorloo/Perth.

talks seemed set up to fail. Israel has continued its murderous assault on Lebanon. As the futile talks ended, Israel has killed more than 2,000 people in Lebanon, including 85 medics and 165 children. Iran had already indicated that attacks on Lebanon were a ‘red line,’ but Israel ignored this and its US backers made no effort to restrain the apartheid state.

### DESPERATION

Behind the war are the forces of international capital and imperialism. They have become more and more ferocious and desperate as the movement against war and opposition to the economic and social policies of the governments

representing the transnational corporations increase. The leaders and giant corporations of the United States head the drive to war and oppression.

In desperation, they have now thrown all caution to the wind and torn up long established norms of behaviour and international law. The war camp is no longer able to achieve its objectives by economic and political means and is more and more resorting to brute military force – invasion, occupation, the direct appointment of governments and the suppression of popular people’s movements.

In their deepening crisis the world’s major corporations are hell bent on plundering the globe’s

natural resources and exploiting its labour as never before. In Australia as in other capitalist countries, these developments have forced the class divide wider and made the contradictions sharper.

### NUCLEAR DANGER

It is with criminal disregard for the future of the people of the world that both the US and Israel refuse to rule out the use of nuclear weapons.


The only sane policy for the world is the complete elimination by all countries of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. The US leaders have consistently rejected such a demand in the past and are now using their

huge stockpile of weapons of mass destruction to impose their military, economic, and political will on all other nations in the world without exception.

To this end, the US, its allies and the owners of the mass media are piling up lies and half-truths to deceive the people and justify the monstrous plans that they are now implementing. The threats to the world’s peace and security and to the sovereignty and independence of nations come from the United States and the global bully’s lackey countries such as Australia.

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## This is a war for domination of the Middle East and the oil trade.

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# Guardian

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## Crazy, evil or both?

Is Trump as mad as a meat axe, or is there a plan? This is the choice that has been presented by a lot of Australian media since Trump's first presidency. Partly it's due to Trump's showman style, which owes a lot to the ringside talk of the professional wrestlers he adores. Partly it's down to the mainstream media's love of a straightforward bad guy and dislike of looking at the underlying issues.

The question is more urgent than usual as the US/Israeli war on Iran and Lebanon rolls on. Trump's actions are causing real pain to working people regardless of their politics. The cost of everything connected to oil is up: petrol, diesel, fertiliser, and all the goods and services that have to be delivered using fuel. It's good news for fuel suppliers, who preemptively raised prices as soon as the war began, bad news for working people.

So is Trump losing his marbles or does he have a master plan? Really the answer is a bit of column A a bit of column B.

Trump is a bigoted and obnoxious character, but in many ways he's a 'continuity candidate,' carrying on the imperialism that previous presidents have served so faithfully. Here are some things Trump didn't invent:

- The US policy of treating China as the number one enemy of the US. That's been going on since at least Obama and his 'pivot to Asia.'

China is a threat, but not in the way the US pretends. An assertive and independent successful country that doesn't do what it's told is a threat to the US position of 'hegemon,' the superpower that makes other countries do what's needed to keep it on top. China supports 'multipolarity' – all countries being independent, working together out of choice if it suits them. That's a threat to the US view of itself as an "indispensable" nation.

- Supporting Israeli apartheid and genocide. US presidents have long funneled financial and military aid to the apartheid state. They've either waded through Israeli attacks on Palestine and neighbouring countries or mildly tut-tutted when Israeli human rights abuses made the news. Joe Biden 'paused' some weapons shipments to Israel as a token of disapproval. It didn't slow down the Israeli attack on Gaza.

- Treating so-called 'allies' with contempt. It's true that Trump has been rude about Canada, NATO, the UK and Australia in a way that other US presidents wouldn't, but the subservient position of the 'allies' towards the US hasn't changed. A vassal state is a vassal state, no matter how polite the dominant nation is.

- Treating workers in the US and elsewhere as disposable assets for US corporations. Trump makes more noises about it, but all US presidents are committed to putting the interests of big business first. US workers have to struggle heroically to unionise a workplace, and US companies do whatever they can get away with to workers in other countries.

- Punishing Cuba for being 'the threat of a good example.' Cuba is a small socialist island that has never posed any kind of threat to US security or its economy, but since the 1959 revolution, has been treated as an existential threat. Here, Trump is different, making the blockade more murderous than it's ever been, but all US presidents since JFK have gone along with the blockade.

What's unique about Trump is his obvious racism, bigotry and association with neo Nazism and Christian Nationalism. In those respects, Trump is a sign of US capitalism under stress. The media in general loves to have a simplistic 'bad guy,' and Trump's pro-wrestling-like persona fits the bill.

Trump won't last forever, but the system that's causing starvation in Cuba, the deaths of children in Gaza and Iran, and economic insecurity in Australia will be around for a lot longer.

# The war spreads – with Australia involved

Continued from page 1

Australia should have no part in these criminal plans. The Australian government can and should instead make a contribution to peace rather than war by immediately withdrawing from AUKUS. The US spy and war-planning station at Pine Gap should be closed. US warships should be refused entry to Australian ports.

The Albanese government is morally and politically defeated. It is now becoming clearer that it serves another master and does not represent the Australian people. It ignores their opinions and tramples on their democratic rights. Our politicians have failed the people of Australia. They have failed the innocent victims of war.

There is a need to wage a political war for a new kind of government which will listen to the people and act in the people's interests. A government which will end the military alliance with the US and close the US bases. A government of the people and for the people.

The time has come when war must be eliminated from the affairs of humanity and all disputes resolved by peaceful means, in accordance with the UN Charter.

## PROTEST CONTINUES

This war concerns all Australians. There's the impact on workers already stretched by a cost-of-living crisis as the cost of everything at all related to fuel increases. There's Australia's involvement – from providing valuable intelligence from the signals base at Pine Gap, to being part of the production chain for the F-35 jets Israel uses to bomb Iran and Lebanon.

The Albanese government tries to pretend its not involved, at the same time as it assures the world that it would do anything the US asked. The latest fig-leaf is the Wedgetail surveillance plane the Labor government sent to the Middle East. The plane was supposed to be helping Gulf states evade Iranian missiles, but Defence Minister Richard Marles has confirmed that the Wedgetail's intelligence can be used by the US military. Marles maintains that the plane is "fundamentally on a



Pro-Palestinian demonstration against the Israeli President's visit.

defensive mission," but he's not fooling anyone. The information the plane provides is being given to the US as it carries out an illegal war.

## 'WE WILL NOT BE SILENCED'

Federal and state attempts to outlaw protests have nothing to do with protecting communities but are about repressing expressions of support for the Palestinian people. Governments cannot tolerate the fact that a majority of the public oppose their shameful complicity in Israel's genocide, evidenced by the millions of people who are taking to the streets around the world.

The anti-protest laws have given the police unprecedented powers – in particular the NSW Minns government which has armed the police

with military-level weapons. The laws will affect not only the marches for Palestine, but the wider right to freedom of expression, association and assembly that underpins all protest rights, affecting all causes and movements.

The call from the protest movement is: Join us to make this clear to governments – we will not be silenced.

War is an obscenity, a product of an obscene system based on theft. The millions of people around the world who are taking to the streets against the US/Israel war on Iran and Lebanon and in solidarity with the Palestinian people, are in effect marching against plans by the biggest robber barons in history to re-divide the world. ✳

## Quote of the Week

**"He has yet again put vested interests ahead of Australians."**

Independent Senator David Pocock on Albanese's half-hearted reform on gambling advertising. As quotes go, this one's a keeper. You can use it for most Labor government decisions.

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# In solidarity with the people of the Middle East

## Central Committee Statement

**The Central Committee (CC) of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) condemns in the strongest terms the escalating war being waged by the United States and Israel against the peoples of Iran, Lebanon and Palestine, and declares its unwavering solidarity with all those resisting imperialism and Zionism. The CC unequivocally condemns the ongoing bombing of civilian infrastructure and residential communities across West Asia. The CC also condemns the politicians subservient to imperialism running cover for the imperial violence of the United States and the ongoing belligerence of Israel under the false guise of a shared Western ‘alliance.’ The indiscriminate bombing of the people of Iran and the occupation and killing of civilians in Lebanon and Palestine must end.**

On 7 April, the President of the United States publicly stated, “A whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back again.” This is a clear genocidal threat against the people of Iran by the only state ever to use nuclear arms to annihilate civilians during war.

This threat was made against a country of ninety million people by a nation which has no regard for the people they kill to maintain their position of global dominance. Even if only viewed as rhetoric

it was intended to provoke terror and subjugation, with complete disregard for the people who are suffering under constant bombardment, economic punishment, and threat of death.

Trump is gambling with people’s lives. For decades, the US and its junior partners have drenched the Middle East in blood – from Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya, Syria, Yemen and Palestine – in order to secure oil, markets and strategic control, not “freedom” or “security.” Zionism’s expansionist drive has rendered no country in the region safe from attack, while Palestinian land continues to be stolen and its people subjected to siege, expulsion and mass murder.

The Communist Party of Australia rejects the notion of peace through military domination. The history of imperial subjugation has only entrenched the suffering of people in the region. The shameful implication that the people being bombed and dispossessed are grateful for their oppression, and that the imperial slaughter of thousands is a path to freedom, is abhorrent.

In Australia we saw Labor politicians disgracefully capitulate, not even able to bring themselves to condemn the threat of nuclear annihilation of a nation. The Australian people are often told that we hold a special alliance with the United States based on our shared values. The values embodied in US actions and statements should

leave all Australians disgusted and appalled. The spineless complicity of our government is on full display. This is witnessed through the continued participation in the production of American war planes, weaponry, and the deployment of Australian military assets. It is also visible in the reckless and inflammatory nuclearisation of Australia through the AUKUS agreement, the continued sharing of intelligence, and the inability to condemn even the most inhumane threats of war crimes by our ‘allies’.

In line with the Political Resolution of the 15th National Congress, the CC reaffirms the need for an independent foreign policy and that the struggle for peace is inseparable from the struggle against imperialism, militarism, and the AUKUS war drive. The CPA is committed to building a broad, militant movement that opposes foreign bases, troop deployments, and nuclear weapons. The CPA demands an end to Australia’s political, economic, and military complicity with US and Israeli aggression.

End the war!

International unity with the workers, and with all peoples suffering the oppressive chains of imperialism.

**Communist Party of Australia  
Central Committee**

12 April 2026

## Systemic wage theft in NSW cruise industry

**The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) has revealed that systematic wage theft from taxpayer funds occurring in and alongside the NSW Cruise industry at publicly owned passenger terminals could potentially be worth millions of dollars.**

MUA Sydney Branch Organiser Shane Reside said “we believe that millions of dollars in wages have been systematically stolen by criminal security companies working under contract to the NSW state government in the International Cruise Terminals of Sydney Harbour, including at Circular Quay and White Bay. The seedy underbelly of this industry is truly staggering.”

The government-owned NSW Port Authority is responsible for managing the security of the international passenger cruise terminals. The Port Authority has contracted out their responsibility for security to Singaporean state-owned multinational ‘Certis.’

“After receiving whistleblower reports almost 12 months ago, the

MUA has been relentlessly digging through layer after layer of shady outsourced contractors performing security at the international passenger cruise terminals. Every layer is worse than the last, and right at the very bottom you have ordinary, working class people being robbed of their hard-earned pay,” Reside said.

The MUA brought the Fair Work Ombudsman in to use their investigative powers to start forensically piecing together a case detailing exactly how much in wages had been stolen by these sub-contractors.

After 12 months of investigation, the Fair Work Ombudsman has confirmed that contracted security services at NSW cruise passenger terminals has been further outsourced or subcontracted out to five separate, shady operators. This authorised outsourcing is a blatant breach of the written contract Certis holds with the Port Authority. Of those five sub-contractors, three have been found to be stealing wages, one has gone into liquidation, and the final company

is ghosting the Ombudsman and seemingly impossible to find.

“We all know that workers in the security industry in NSW are overwhelmingly drawn from migrant, working class communities. It is an absolute disgrace that these people are being robbed by criminal outfits employed under contract to the NSW state government.”

“Successive governments have outsourced critical infrastructure to multinational corporate interests right across our economy, so it’s no surprise that a profit-hungry multinational has overseen a wage heist of this magnitude,” Reside said.

MUA Sydney Branch Secretary Paul Keating said “the question we should really be asking ourselves is what else is happening in the international passenger cruise terminals in Sydney Harbour? There is not one, not two, but five separate shady outfits that have been pulling people off the street, giving them a security uniform and sending them down to manage an international border arrival point.”

“If the Port Authority audits



Photo: Bahnfreund – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

haven’t picked up wage theft of this magnitude from taxpayer funds, what else have they missed that’s going on down at these terminals? What are they going to do to stamp this out?”

“For decades, the MUA has warned that state government outsourcing of security arrangements to private multinationals was a massive risk on every single front. Sadly the NSW government pursued this risky and unprincipled approach in spite of all sound advice, and their approach has bitten them on the arse,” Keating said.

“The MUA has uncovered multiple instances of criminal organisations running security at the international border in our international passenger terminals,” Keating explained. “Will Minns step in now and take action to make sure that this never happens again or are he and his government captive to the same multinational criminals who robbed these workers in the first place? I’m waiting for my phone to ring.”

Maritime Union Australia 🇺🇦

# Thorpe alleges PM refused to meet deaths in custody families

**Thirty-five years after the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, it has been alleged that Prime Minister Anthony Albanese refused to meet with the families of some of those whose deaths sparked the landmark inquiry.**

The Royal Commission (RCIADIC), established by the Hawke government in October 1987 and led by Federal Court judge James Henry Muirhead QC, was driven by public outrage over the number of Indigenous deaths in custody. It handed down its final report in April 1991.

It made 339 recommendations, including that incarceration should only be used as a last resort – a principle that has since been wound back in several Australian states and territories. Since then, at least 630 First Nations people have died in custody, while many of the recommendations remain unimplemented.

Independent Senator Lidia Thorpe has alleged the families of at least two people whose deaths in custody helped spark the RCIADIC have been denied a meeting with the Prime Minister.

Apparently a letter on their behalf was sent to the Prime Minister, Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy, and the Attorney-General, but the Prime Minister was unable to meet with the family.

It is understood the families were offered a meeting with Senator McCarthy – who regularly meets with First Nations community members from across the country about a variety of issues, including deaths in custody – but this was declined.

Senator Thorpe argued the refusal of a meeting “tells you everything you need to know about this government’s priorities.”

“The Prime Minister refuses to meet with grieving families who have been waiting 35 years for action,” she said. “Albanese refuses to show leadership, and refuses to use the powers he has to stop these deaths.”

The 1987-1991 RCIADIC found that, while Indigenous people did not die in custody at a higher rate than non-Indigenous people, their much higher incarceration rate led to a disproportionate number of deaths.

As a result, scrutiny has focused on policies that experts say have driven incarceration numbers higher.

Lawyers, human rights groups, Indigenous bodies and advocates have repeatedly criticised governments over their response to deaths in custody, with last year recording the highest number since records began in 1979.

The federal government has faced sustained criticism for refusing to condemn states and territories for introducing policies – particularly in youth justice – that have led to more First Nations people being held in custody.

During his Closing the Gap address in February, Albanese appeared to back the states’ and territories’ approach – including laws allowing life sentences for children as young as 10 – arguing they “have every right to put the safety of their communities first.”

*National Indigenous Times* (edited for space) ✳



National Day of Action: Stop Black Deaths In Custody, 2021, Naarm/Melbourne.  
Photo: matthrkc.com.au – flickr.com (CC BY 2.0)

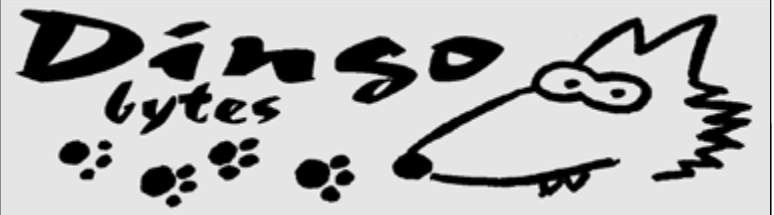


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The Health Services Union (HSU) is calling on governments and employers to deliver immediate, targeted relief for health, aged care and disability workers during Australia’s worsening fuel crisis.

HSU National Secretary Lloyd Williams said the union’s members were bearing a disproportionate share of the crisis, with no option to work from home.

“These workers kept this country going through a pandemic, and they are doing it again now. They will turn up regardless. That’s the nature of the work,” Williams said.

“But turning up is getting harder and more expensive by the day, and the people who depend on them can’t afford for that to become a reason workers don’t show up at all.”

“We need governments and employers to recognise that a generic response to this crisis is not enough for workers in this sector,” Williams emphasised.

“The federal government’s decision to halve the fuel excise was a welcome step, now it’s time for employers to act to relieve pressure on an essential workforce.

“When you’ve got casual workers weighing up whether it’s worth taking a shift, there’s a serious problem that could have terrible ramifications for some of the most vulnerable people in society.”

The HSU represents more than 110,000 workers across health, aged care, disability and community services.

**PARASITE OF THE WEEK:** is Bendigo Bank. The Finance Sector Union (FSU) has strongly condemned Bendigo Bank’s partnership with global tech companies Infosys and Genpact, which represents a dramatic and dangerous escalation in the fight to protect Australian jobs from being wiped out by AI.

The bank refuses to outline the number of staff that would be impacted, but the FSU anticipates it could be in the hundreds – with some reports indicating up to 1,000.

The union says it is unlikely that any area of the bank will be spared in this next phase of the bank’s so-called ‘productivity program,’ with the first wave of cuts expected over the coming months in the technology division.

The FSU is aware other areas impacted include business and agribusiness, lending assessment and fulfillment, third party banking fulfillment, lending operations – consumer, customer processing and wealth operations, customer remediation, mortgage help, operational excellence, finance, financial crime operations, and contact centres.

The FSU is concerned that business operations impacts will have devastating direct and flow on effects on customers and communities who rely on Bendigo Bank for their banking needs.

The union also warns this leaves many questions unanswered about how sensitive information will be managed by the bank, with risks that customer data could be housed offshore.

The union says an AI plan on paper won’t stop AI-related job cuts; Australians urgently need regulation that will genuinely protect workers.

FSU National Secretary Julia Angrisano said, “The race to the bottom has well and truly started in Australia when it comes to AI adoption and offshoring, and Australians should be outraged by the failures of both business and government.

“We are now seeing in real time the disastrous consequences of a complete lack of AI regulation, and Australian workers are paying the ultimate price. The idea of Bendigo Bank being a community bank is now dead. It has completely abandoned any pretence of being Australia’s most trusted bank.

“The fact that Bendigo Bank cannot say how many jobs will be impacted inspires zero confidence that management understands the full ramifications of what they are doing.

“We therefore demand that CEO Richard Fennell and the board immediately reverse their decision before it’s too late. Australian workers have long understood that banks and big business were never going to act ethically. Unfortunately, the federal government has been asleep at the wheel, but it’s not too late for them to step up and protect local jobs.”

# Time to stop giving away gas

**If you drink beer, congratulations, you're the backbone of the Australian economy! After all, that's how politicians and the media describe the gas industry. The federal government collects more money from the beer excise than from the Petroleum Resource Rent Tax, as Independent ACT Senator David Pocock pointed out in Parliament, in an exchange that went viral.**

When Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was asked why Australian beer drinkers pay more tax than gas export companies, the PM dodged the issue by accusing Senator Pocock of "promot[ing] grievance."

If, like most Australians, you think Australia shouldn't be giving away its gas for free, or that the gas industry should contribute more from its super profits tax than the beer excise, the Prime Minister seems to think you should stop whingeing about it. The real question is – why isn't the Prime Minister aggrieved by this gas rip-off?

Australia has a gas export problem. Gas exports have led to the tripling of wholesale east coast gas prices and doubling of electricity prices, since exports began in 2015. The gas export industry doesn't even pay royalties on more than half of those exports, according to Australia Institute research. In just four years, multinational companies

made \$149 billion exporting gas from Australia royalty-free.

It is obscene that Australia raises so little money from gas exports, despite being one of the largest producers on the planet. Around 80 per cent of the gas we produce is used for export. It can only be dug up and sold once. We should be raking in the revenue from our gas exports, like Norway does.

Nobel Laureate and economist Professor Joseph Stiglitz urged the Australian government to "follow the money" and start imposing "a very, very high tax rate" on the country's natural resources. "Get the highest value from whoever can extract your resources," Professor Stiglitz said.

That's exactly what the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) is proposing to fix this problem, a 25 per cent tax on gas exports, which could raise an estimated \$17 billion a year in revenue. Polling shows Australians from across the political spectrum support the ACTU's 25 per cent gas export tax. It's hard to find public policies that can attract that kind of across-the-board support from the public.

Last week, Independent Senator David Pocock threw his support behind a 25 per cent gas export tax, joining Australian Greens Leader Larissa Waters, who publicly supported the policy in her address at the Australia Institute's Revenue Summit in Canberra last year.

Instead, Albanese's plan is essentially to continue giving Australia's gas away for free. Is that a grievance? Yes. But it's also just a fact. It's right there in the government's own budget papers in 2023: "To date, not a single LNG project has paid any PRRT and many are not expected to pay significant amounts of PRRT until the 2030s."

No company better illustrates the great gas rip-off better than Japanese gas company INPEX. Each year, INPEX exports more gas each year than is used in New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia combined. It sells no gas to Australians, outside of emergencies. It pays no royalties, no Petroleum Resource Rent Tax (PRRT) and paid no corporate tax on \$21 billion in gas exports between 2015 and 2025. I guess it's not hard to make money when Australia effectively gives you its gas for free.

You could argue that Japan is better at extracting value from Australia's gas exports than we are. Japan is on-selling the Australian gas it imports for domestic use, according to new analysis from (IEEFA). It found that Japanese companies resold between AUD\$11-14 billion worth of Australian LNG in 2024, with profits likely exceeding AUD\$1 billion – or roughly the same as Australia collects from the Petroleum Resource Rent Tax.

Australia is a low-tax country and it has a revenue problem.



Photo: needpix.com

Australians often hear that we "can't afford" to do this or that in the Budget. If we collected just the OECD average in tax each year, the Treasurer would have an extra \$140bn or so in revenue. A 25 per cent tax on gas exports would raise revenue from those who can most afford it that the government could invest in those who most need it. It would raise enough revenue for

the government to offer targeted tax breaks for low-income earners who are struggling to make ends meet. Or, it could generate revenue for things Australians desperately need like public housing, health care, education and universal childcare. All while cutting into the profits of fossil fuel polluters.

The Australia Institute ✚

## Australians and war crimes

Andrew Brown

**Two men have been arrested and charged for crimes committed while on military service in other countries. The first you probably know about: Ben Roberts-Smith, Australia's most highly decorated living soldier has been charged with five counts of murder.**

On the same day Roberts-Smith was charged, a young man from suburban Adelaide was charged with operating a drone for the Ukrainian forces without federal authorisation.

Both men arrested. Both treated as threats to the legal order. Both processed with speed and thoroughness.

Now ask yourself who has not been processed.

An estimated one thousand former and current soldiers of the Israeli Defence Forces are living in Australia. Some of them were in Gaza. The International Court of Justice has found a plausible risk of genocide in that operation.

Not a suspicion. Not an allegation from a protest group.

A formal legal finding from the highest court on earth, accompanied by binding provisional measures. The International Criminal Court is separately pursuing war crimes and crimes against humanity arising from the same conflict.

Has one been called in for questioning? Have the Australian Federal Police executed

one search warrant? Has the Attorney General issued one referral? Has anyone in the Albanese government commissioned a legal assessment of whether section 268 of the Criminal Code, the provision that covers genocide and war crimes and applies to Australian citizens regardless of which uniform they wore, has any relevance here?

In February, senior human rights lawyer Chris Sidoti stated publicly that Australians who served in Gaza could face criminal liability if genocide or war crimes are established, and that you do not need to have pulled a trigger for liability to attach.

The government's position toward returning IDF soldiers is not just inconsistent but incoherent.

You cannot spend two hundred million

dollars investigating your own special forces, arrest a reservist for flying Ukrainian drones, and then claim you have no framework or obligation to examine Australians who served in a military operation currently before two international courts.

The framework exists.

Anthony Albanese declined to comment on the Roberts-Smith matter, saying he would not discuss legal proceedings. He has maintained the same silence on the one thousand people from a different conflict who came home to no proceedings at all.

The government should be asked that question directly, on the record, every day until it answers.

Michael West Report (edited for space) ✚

## Arab Council Australia condemns Israel's attacks on Lebanon

**The Arab Council Australia has "unequivocally" condemned Israel's indiscriminate and unlawful attacks targeting civilian populations and infrastructure in Lebanon saying in a statement that Israel's actions constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions, and amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.**

On Wednesday, 8 April 2026, Israel conducted its "largest coordinated strike" against Lebanon, hitting over 100 targets in just 10 minutes, without warning.

This widespread assault has killed hundreds of civilians and wounded thousands more across Beirut, Southern Lebanon, the Eastern Bekaa Valley and other regions throughout the country. Hospitals are overwhelmed beyond capacity by the influx of the dead and the wounded. Hundreds and thousands have been displaced, many left stranded in inclement weather with nowhere safe to seek refuge. More than one million Lebanese people had already been internally displaced since the simultaneous war on Iran and Lebanon began, even before this latest assault.

Members of the Lebanese and Palestinian communities across Australia are expressing extreme outrage at the continued failure of the international community to halt Israeli military actions affecting civilian populations.

Many are witnessing the destructive impact of sustained military operations on civilian areas, by Israel including reports affecting their own relatives, and are increasingly alarmed by rising civilian casualties and displacement.

The psychological toll on diaspora communities watching the destruction of homes, neighbourhoods, and essential infrastructure

in their countries of origin is severe and ongoing.

These attacks represent a calculated campaign that amounts to collective punishment of civilian populations and reflect the same unlawful military practices documented in Gaza, where over 70,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 2023. Such actions constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and undermine the legal framework established to protect civilians in times of conflict.

The Council is demanding the immediate cessation of all Israeli military operations against Lebanon

and independent investigations into these war crimes by appropriate international bodies.

The Council is also demanding protection of civilian lives and essential infrastructure including hospitals, schools, and power facilities and unimpeded humanitarian access to all affected areas, and urging world leaders and the Australian government to take decisive action "to stop the Israeli war machine and prevent further death and destruction in Lebanon and throughout the region."

Arab Council of Australia ✚

# CSIRO 'barely surviving'

The science industry showed up to support CSIRO in Canberra recently, as the Senate Economics Committee held a public hearing as part of an ongoing inquiry into CSIRO resources and funding.

A diverse selection of individuals and groups took part, ranging from scientists appearing in a personal capacity, to industry big-hitters and representatives of the peak bodies for research. CSIRO also gave evidence, and the Staff Association delegation presented the perspective from the workplace.

The committee is now considering the evidence and preparing a report for the Parliament, which is now expected to be complete no later than 21 April 2026.

## UNION TESTIMONY

The views of CSIRO staff were represented by Staff Association Secretary Susan Tonks, CSIRO Governing Councillor Dr Everard Edwards and workplace delegate Dr Steve Rintoul.

"There's no denying the desperate circumstances of our appearance here today," Tonks said.

"Over the past year, CSIRO has lost more than 800 jobs, and now another 350 full-time-equivalent research roles are set to go. The scale of the cuts under the current government are set to surpass those made under the Abbott government."

"While the government's emergency MYEFO (Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook) funding is very welcome, it's a one-off measure and does not address the CSIRO's long-term sustainability. Put simply, CSIRO is barely surviving and needs urgent help," Tonks said.

Dr Edwards drew on his experiences in the Agriculture and Food research unit.

"Currently, CSIRO believes that 70 per cent of research across the research unit is externally funded, and that includes the overheads, which typically are around 115 per cent of direct costs."

"The impact of this is that we actually no longer have the ability to support new, up-and-coming industries or smaller industries in the way that we did in the past."

"If we look at something like the wine industry, CSIRO had a key role in supporting its success in the 1980s. But, right now, we can't really do that," Dr Edwards said.

Dr Rintoul's assessment of the funding landscape was plain.

"The funding model for CSIRO is broken. Generations of CSIRO leadership have attempted to cope with reduced appropriation in real terms by seeking external funding."

"First, the appropriation funding was expected to be leveraged to obtain 30 per cent co-investment. Then it was 50 per cent. More recently, it was at least 70 per cent and preferably full cost recovery. Once all the appropriation is fully leveraged, it's the end of the road."

"This brings us to the present, where deep staff cuts have been made or proposed and further cuts seem likely, without a sizeable and immediate increase in funding," Dr Rintoul said.

The research industry was well represented with testimony from Science and Technology Australia (STA), the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (AATSE), and the Australian Academy of Science (The Academy) to name just a few.

Science and Technology Australia Chief Executive Ryan Winn spoke of the funding pressures across the wider research community.

"CSIRO is the canary in the coal mine. Commonwealth funding for research and development has increased modestly over the past decade, but, in real terms, adjusted for inflation, it has flatlined or declined."

"Just like households are feeling the pinch of the cost of living increasing faster than incomes, the research system is feeling the pinch of increasing research costs, from consumables to specialist equipment to wages, increasing faster than support from grants and appropriations."

"The sector is hurting ... this is not sustainable. Australia must choose whether we value our research capability enough to fund it properly," Winn said.

CSIRO Staff Association ✚



CSIRO Parkes Radio Telescope. Photo: Amanda Slater – flickr.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

## cuts set to surpass those made under the Abbott government

# Climate Council: time to Trump-proof Australia

C Marino

**The Climate Council is urging the Albanese government to use next month's Federal Budget to fund measures that will deliver Australians lasting energy security, not just temporary fixes.**

*The Pedal to the Metal: A Budget to Break Free from Fuel Chaos* analysis outlines four key measures the government can implement to shore up long-term energy security, lower costs and cut climate pollution.

The principles focus on electrification, solar and batteries, and cleaner transport to cut bills now

and protect Australians against future oil and gas supply shortages and price spikes.

Climate Council CEO Amanda McKenzie said:

"The more we can electrify our homes and transport, the more we reduce our reliance on imported oil and gas. That not only cuts costs, it shields Aussie households, farms and businesses from on-going global price shocks.

"Right now many Australians are suffering from petrol price pain; bringing in more EVs will protect families from fuel shocks. In March, Australian EV drivers together saved \$50 million in fuel costs.

"It's crucial that our government

does not settle for short-term thinking and short-term fixes; it needs to meet the moment by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and investing in reliable, affordable Australian power from the sun, wind and batteries.

"We're proposing key measures that will set us up for energy security now and into the future: accelerating the rollout of renewables, electrifying homes, transport and industry, appropriately taxing fossil fuels and using the revenue to fund the transition."

Climate Councillor Greg Bourne said:

"Unlike the global oil crises of the 1970s, this time there are

cheap and abundant alternatives to fossil fuels: renewable energy and electric vehicles are already widely deployed. We just need more.

"The sun doesn't care about the Strait of Hormuz and the wind doesn't care who's in the White House.

"The Australian government is better placed than most to capitalise on renewable energy solutions. That would be the best response. The worst response would be to double down and commit to long-term investments in the fuels that are driving the price rises being felt by every Australian right now.

"It's time to embrace the future, not cling to the past."

The report found that Australia is badly exposed to global fossil fuel shocks. Australia imports 90% of its refined fuel. It also found that a shift to public transport use could make a huge difference in terms of lowering carbon emissions and improving energy security. Shifting just one per cent of car trips to public transport would save 866 thousand litres of diesel per week.

Communist Party of Australia policy is for expanded and nationalised public transport infrastructure. ✚

# Global Sumud Flotilla takes off

Peter Farmer

**At a time when public attention is focussed on Israeli and US attacks on Iran and Lebanon, Gaza is still being attacked and is still under an illegal Israeli blockade. 17 Australians have sailed as part of the Global Sumud Flotilla in an attempt to break the Israeli naval siege of the Palestinian enclave.**

The flotilla this time includes activists from 51 countries, more than 3,000 people

all up, sailing to bring construction materials, food and medical supplies to the besieged Gaza strip.

Activists are sailing from a number of Mediterranean ports.

Jayden Kitchener-Waters, is a Gomerioi and Ngiyampaa man who was sacked by the NSW Premier's Department for displaying pro-Palestinian slogans on his guitar before a performance at a departmental event. Kitchener-Waters said that it's important to continue pressuring governments, decision-makers and leaders.

It's a risky and brave decision by the 17 Australians. Members of the last cohort were held for over a week in an Israeli prison in the Negev desert, famous for human rights abuses. Activists spoke of torture, abuse and sexual assault from guards and Israeli soldiers.

Wiradjuri, Ngiyampaa and Wailwan man Ethan Floyd told *Deepcut* that Israel's political goal is "always to deter future participants – to make people think that it's far too dangerous to do." Floyd added that however awful the flotilla members' experience

is, "it will be the five-star version of what Palestinians face every day in those prisons."

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has not been encouraging, with officials telling the Australian contingent to "try if you can" to get the Australian Embassy on the phone. Floyd has urged Australians to put pressure on DFAT via MPs and the Foreign Minister to get DFAT to actively offer consular services to Australian flotilla members when they are detained. ✚

# Urgent action needed after uni revelations

**Australian universities are under fire after revelations of secret government audit findings, a \$1.8 billion consultancy bill and mass job cuts driven by flawed data.**

The ABC's *Four Corners* program has painted a damning new picture of governance failure, confirming warnings the National Tertiary Employees Union (NTEU) has been raising for years.

The program drew on a draft report from the Australian National Audit Office, analysis of sector-wide consultancy spending, and testimony from the union, academics, students and whistleblowers.

NTEU National President Dr Alison Barnes said the evidence was now impossible to ignore.

"University leaders have been cutting courses, slashing jobs and telling staff and students there was no choice. Our long-held suspicions that the financial crises driving many of those decisions weren't real have now been confirmed. This is a catastrophic failure," she said.

"The NTEU raised these concerns for years. Vice-chancellors didn't want to hear it. Staff, students and the community have

paid the price for their arrogance and impunity.

"Every time we look under the bonnet of universities what we see is even more rotten."

The program revealed Australian universities spent an estimated \$1.8 billion in a single year on external consultants, with no requirement to disclose who they were hiring or what the money is for.

Analysis of university councils and senates found consultancy firm partners embedded on the governing bodies that are supposed to provide oversight, in some cases with those same firms winning lucrative contracts from the universities they were helping to govern.

"Consultants with no accountability, liability or expertise are being paid billions to gut universities," Dr Barnes said.

"When the data they use is wrong and the advice is bad, nobody is held responsible – except the staff who lose their jobs."

Education Minister Jason Clare pointed out measures the government was taking on accountability and new legislation to strengthen the regulator TEQSA's powers.

Dr Barnes welcomed the

government's direction but urged faster and more ambitious reform.


"The Senate inquiry has done its work," she said.

"TEQSA needs the powers the minister has promised. Jobs Ready Graduates – a funding model that has failed students and universities alike – must be replaced.

"The government knows what needs to be done, now it's time for major action."

The NTEU is calling for:

- Full implementation of the Senate inquiry's governance recommendations
- Mandatory public disclosure of all consultancy spend, by firm and purpose, with an explanation of how internal capacity does not exist
- Strengthened TEQSA powers to intervene when governance fails
- Replacement of Jobs Ready Graduates with a funding model that puts students first
- Increased staff and student representation on university councils. New powers for academic boards to hold university councils to account.

National Tertiary Education Union 



University of Wollongong campus. Photo: Nikita Sergey – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 3.0)

**Check out the official Instagram account of the Communist Party of Australia**

[www.instagram.com/communist.party.australia/](http://www.instagram.com/communist.party.australia/)

## GREEN NOTES

### Environmental impact of US base on Cocos (Keeling) Islands

Graham Holton

Australia is spending \$568 million to extend the West Island airfield at an Australian-United States military base on Cocos (Keeling) Islands, 3,000 km north west of Perth. The upgrade is designed to accommodate P-8A Poseidon submarine-hunting, maritime surveillance aircraft and the MC-55A Peregrine intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance fleet. This will enhance Australia's monitoring of the Indian Ocean shipping lanes. This 'mini-Diego Garcia' increases US and Australian air-sea battle capacity in the Indian Ocean. It is set for completion by 2028, transforming the remote territory into a key hub for monitoring maritime traffic at a final cost of \$3 billion.

The project has brought in a large workforce, increasing stress on the local population, local resources and environmental stress on the sensitive, low-lying coral atoll. The construction near a shallow lagoon will impact the marine species' habitat with reports indicating a detrimental impact on the endangered green and hawksbill turtles.

The project is aligned with the US Pacific Deterrence Initiative, with the US operating surveillance aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) from the island. Drone operations are a 'realistic possibility' for the Australian air force's Ghost Bat multirole aircraft. The base aims to maintain the US military advantage over China by modernising and strengthening the US presence in the Indo-Pacific region. For Australia it will enhance its capacity to deploy advanced, long-range patrol aircraft to secure Australia's north-western maritime approaches.

The expansion includes a new wharf, increased fuel storage, and fire-fighting capabilities. It will strengthen taxiways, apron, drainage, lighting systems and logistics infrastructure. There is the additional cost of radar and signals intelligence, housing and logistics for personnel, and water desalination systems for the increased population.

The Department of Defence said it is committed to ecological sustainable development, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adopting low-maintenance, water-sensitive designs. The federal government will need to address environmental impacts on marine ecosystems, especially the increased risks related to climate-induced coastal erosion and the long-term sustainability of a military installation on the fragile atoll. Frank Mills, Cocos Islands Shire Council CEO, said "Historically the Cocos Malay people were promised a lot of things when they voted to assimilate to Australia but not many of those have ever come to fruition." They have little expectation on things improving under the base agreement.

The construction is an immediate threat to the fragile coral ecosystem, from contamination from PFAS chemical firefighting foams, fuel spills, groundwater pollution, waste materials and dumped equipment, creating long-term toxic waste issues. Increased flights increase noise pollution from heavy aircraft operations disrupting wildlife and their habitats.

The islands are extremely vulnerable to sea-level rise and erosion, and parts of the atoll could be underwater within fifty years, with reports of significant storm surges and beach degradation already occurring. The government's \$23 million package will manage climate-related risks, including upgrading seawalls to protect against erosion and storms.

The project also involves removing decades of waste, including rusted, perforated steel-planking matting from previous air-strips. Defence is planning to remove, screen, and containerise waste for shipment to mainland Australia. Material waste that has become a functional marine habitat may not be removed. The military project may provide great benefit to the US, but it will leave Australia with the environmental cleanup. Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are also outlined in the US Pacific Deterrence Initiative worth up to US\$15 billion.

# ‘Our members are united’ – Offshore Alliance stands firm for workers

**The Offshore Alliance – Australian Workers’ Union (AWU)/Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) – has applied to the Fair Work Commission for a Protected Action Ballot Order (PABO), marking a major escalation in its dispute with oil and gas giant INPEX after more than six months of stalled negotiations.**

The application follows growing frustration among the 400 highly skilled offshore and onshore workers across INPEX’s Ichthys LNG operations, including facilities in Darwin and offshore in the Timor Sea, where bargaining has failed to deliver meaningful progress on pay, job security, and conditions.

Union representatives say INPEX has refused to agree to core claims put forward by workers, with the company’s latest enterprise agreement offer well below industry standard and resoundingly rejected by members in an internal poll conducted by the Alliance.

Offshore Alliance representatives said workers felt like they had no other option to take the first step toward strike action after enduring years of declining real wages and ongoing concerns about job security, which INPEX has failed to acknowledge or address in half a year of bargaining.

“After six months of negotiations, INPEX has failed to agree to even the most basic claims put forward by its workforce,” Offshore Alliance spokesman and AWU Assistant National Secretary Chris Donovan said.

“Workers who operate some of the most complex and high-risk facilities in the country are being asked to accept an agreement that does nothing to address their concerns about pay, conditions and job security.”

“In an industry where contracting out work to the lowest bidder is rife, our members reasonably want INPEX to commit to continuing to direct hire its current workforce. The company hasn’t even been able to do that.”

The union argues INPEX’s



Photo: INPEX Australia Facebook

proposal would erode real wages over time, freeze key allowances, and strip away critical job protections, including safeguards against outsourcing and redundancies.

The move to seek a PABO opens the door for workers to vote on taking protected industrial action, including strikes and work stoppages, if approved by the Fair Work Commission.

“This application is about union members exercising a democratic right to endorse industrial action in pursuit of a fair and acceptable collective agreement,” Donovan said.

“INPEX has left workers with no other choice. The company has had every opportunity to negotiate in good faith and deliver industry-standard conditions.”

The current INPEX enterprise agreement, finalised in early 2022, was the first enterprise agreement negotiated by the Offshore Alliance with a major gas producer. Later in 2022, Shell’s Prelude FLNG became the second, followed by both Woodside Energy and Chevron Australia in late 2023.

The negotiations with INPEX are the first negotiations for the Alliance for a second-generation agreement with a tier one operator.

“The INPEX Ichthys and Shell Prelude agreements will set both the industry standard and the tone of negotiations in the sector for the next round of collective agreements. Offshore Alliance members working for these employers understand that what they accept in negotiations

will have an impact on the industry standard in the sector for years to come. They don’t take that lightly,” said Donovan.

The Offshore Alliance expects a ballot of members to proceed later this month, with potential industrial action possible as early as 3 May if members endorse it.

The dispute comes amid a strong financial performance from INPEX, with the company forecasting significant profit growth and deriving the majority of its earnings from Australian operations.

“Last financial year INPEX made \$10 billion in net operating profit, all of it from Australian oil and gas, much of it on-sold by INPEX Japan at inflated prices,” Donovan said.

“INPEX is sending a ship loaded with Australian gas worth about \$140 million a pop every couple of days to Japan, about four a week, that’s half a billion dollars sailing out of our country on a weekly basis.”

Union leaders say the contrast between rising profits and declining worker conditions has only hardened resolve among the workforce.

“INPEX’s success is built on the skill and dedication of its workforce.

“Our members are united, they are determined, and they are ready to fight for an agreement that reflects the value of the work they do.”

The Offshore Alliance ✳

## Indonesian killing spree in West Papua

Paul Gregoire

**Members of the occupying Indonesian police went on a murderous rampage in the West Papuan village of Moanemani on 31 March 2026. Officers fired randomly into a local marketplace, prior to the police assault shifting to neighbouring Ikebo village, where police started indiscriminately shooting upon Papuan houses.**

Five West Papuans were shot dead, and an unknown number injured. The Indonesian police commenced applying collective punishment to the villagers of Moanemani and Ikebo, after the body of a murdered police officer, who was an Indigenous West Papuan, was found in front of Ebenezer Church in Moanemani.

This callous attack comes at a time when Indonesian president Prabowo Subianto has been cracking down on West Papuans in their own homelands. This marks an escalation

of attacks on villages that commenced in 2018, under the former Jokowi government.

After Dutch colonists left West Papua, the United Nations brokered a deal for West Papuans to hold a referendum on independence. Seeking to maintain control of the resource-rich region, Indonesia held a 1969 vote where 1,026 Papuans voted at gun point to remain with Jakarta.

The recent shootings reveal the circumstances that West Papuans have lived under since the 1960s, and the escalation in violence against the locals are in keeping with a Prabowo presidency. The former Suharto-era army general earned a reputation for perpetrating war crimes against the East Timorese and West Papuans.

Footage of the recent incident supplied by the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP), shows armed and heavily uniformed Indonesian police emerging from a police van and chasing unarmed West Papuan civilians deeper into a residential area.

“Indonesia’s actions in Dogiyai are both a crime against humanity – a grave act of colonial violence – and a breach of international law,” insisted West Papuan provisional government president Benny Wenda. “Shooting indiscriminately into homes and a public market is a form of collective punishment, while the intentional killing of civilians is a war crime.”

This latest incident comes after Jakarta bombed a makeshift refugee camp in forcing West Papuans, who were already displaced to relocate once more. There are currently 105,000 West Papuan villagers displaced in the highlands, due to the ongoing attacks on these unarmed people living in the planet’s third largest rainforest.

“What the carnage in Dogiyai demonstrates is that Indonesia views all West Papuans as legitimate targets,” Wenda said. “Elders, women, and children: no one is safe from the murderous vengeance of the Indonesian security state. The massacre

triggered a wave of internal displacement, as terrified civilians fled into the mountains and surrounding villages.”

A key issue for West Papuan independence is the reluctance of other nations to raise the issue of the occupied Melanesian peoples, so as to not rock the boat with Jakarta. Wenda recently pointed to the International Parliamentarians for West Papua (IPWP) analysis of the September 2025 established EU-Indonesia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as an example.

IPWP considers that in signing off on the FTA, the European Union has effectively approved the ongoing environmental destruction and rights abuses caused by Indonesia in the Melanesian region. The West Papuan environment and its people’s rights were not considered during negotiations, yet a fair amount of LNG, palm oil and metals are sourced from West Papua by EU nations.

Sydney Criminal Lawyers ✳

# Europe refuses war script

Dr Hana Saada

The most revealing feature of the current confrontation is not the fury of its rhetoric, but the narrowing of its coalition. In the political language of war, the loudest voices often conceal the deepest fragility. That is precisely what is now unfolding in Europe, where Spain's refusal to be drawn into the US–Israeli campaign against Iran has exposed a wider truth: the Western alliance is no longer a single strategic instinct, but a field of competing calculations, liabilities, and red lines.

This shift has been rendered unmistakably clear in Madrid. In an unusually direct and unfiltered rebuke, Spain's Transport Minister Óscar Puente issued a statement that has since reverberated far beyond national borders: "We are not going with you even around the corner, you genocidal bastard. Let's see if you get it."

Far from being a mere outburst, the remark crystallises a deeper strategic posture – one that rejects both the premises and the trajectory of escalation. It is the language of rupture, not improvisation; a declaration that the threshold of participation has been reached and refused.

The Spanish remark that the country would not go "even around the corner" with Benjamin Netanyahu may have sounded incendiary, but its political meaning was sober. It captured a continent that has grown increasingly unwilling to lend itself to open-ended escalation in the Middle East, particularly when the costs are clear, the objectives remain undefined, and the exit remains invisible. Europe may still speak the language of partnership, but it no longer accepts automatic obedience as its price.

This is not simply a matter of diplomatic tone. It is a recognition that the confrontation with Iran has entered a phase in which military force no longer guarantees strategic clarity. Washington and Tel Aviv have framed escalation as a test of resolve, yet the test now lies elsewhere: in whether allies are prepared to underwrite a conflict whose repercussions would travel far beyond the battlefield. On that question, Europe is hesitating less than it is refusing.

Spain's posture is especially significant because it combines political, economic, and public pressure. Madrid does not merely object in principle; it has made clear that its territory will not be turned into an auxiliary



Artwork: Staff Sgt Jamal Sutter – wikimedia.org (Public Domain)

## Europe no longer accepts automatic obedience as the price of partnership

platform for a war it does not own. That distinction matters. It signals a shift from passive alignment to selective consent, from reflexive solidarity to strategic inspection. Germany has ruled out involvement. France has insisted it is not a party. Across the continent, the vocabulary of "stability" now carries more weight than the old reflex of confrontation.

The reason is not difficult to discern. Any escalation around Iran immediately implicates the Strait of Hormuz, through which 17 to 20 million barrels of oil move every day, nearly one-fifth of global consumption. That is not a peripheral corridor; it is the hinge of global energy security. A disruption there would not remain regional. It would arrive in European economies as inflation, in Asian markets as shock, and in Washington as political blowback. The projected rise in oil prices, already hovering around \$115 per

barrel and vulnerable to spikes of \$150 to \$175, has made risk impossible to disguise.

What is emerging, then, is a new European realism. It does not romanticise Iran, nor does it endorse conflict. It simply refuses the premise that war can be outsourced without consequence. European governments have seen enough to understand that a conflict launched under the banner of pressure may quickly become a liability of endurance. In that environment, the old Atlantic assumption that allies will follow once the drums begin to beat is no longer reliable.

There is, too, a deeper political exhaustion at work. The US–Israeli approach has demanded alignment without persuasion, escalation without consensus, and sacrifice without strategy. Europe is increasingly unwilling to participate in that bargain. The refusal is not theatrical; it is structural. It

reflects a continent that has learned, perhaps too late, that dependency is not the same as unity and that alliance is not the same as shared judgment.

The war may still be spoken of in Washington and Tel Aviv as if its outcome can be managed through pressure, posture, and selective force. But Europe's response suggests otherwise. The coalition is fraying where it matters most: not in declarations, but in permission. Once that permission is withdrawn, the political architecture of escalation begins to weaken.

That is the significance of Spain's statement. It is not merely a rebuke. It is a marker of a larger strategic condition: the West is no longer prepared to move as one when the cost of movement is war, the price is global instability, and the reward is uncertain at best.

People's World ✨

## Greater Israel: from political ideology to territorial practice

Gil Shohat

Linguistically, a glance at the meaning of the term 'greater Israel' in Hebrew already provides an indication of the concept's appeal beyond radical messianic circles. In English we speak of "Greater Israel," in Hebrew, the literal term is "the whole land of Israel." This choice of terms shows that what is at stake here is a supposed "wholeness" that has held Jewish-Israeli society together for decades, despite all rivalries.

Even in liberal Israeli circles, the biblical terms "Judea and Samaria" have become the common designations for the occupied West Bank. What we have been seeing since the current Israeli government took office in December 2022 is therefore "merely" the accelerated codification of the Greater Israel ideology in coalition agreements, ministerial plans, bureaucratic measures, and violent military and paramilitary practices.

Finance Minister Smotrich regularly calls for the annexation of the entire West Bank and is currently pushing ahead with several projects designed to make national self-determination for Palestinians impossible.

Thus Israel's security policy narrative, which has existed since 1967 and claims that a Palestinian state would pose an existential threat to Israel, has given way in recent years to an open commitment to the ideology of Greater Israel – to such an extent that it has now risen to the rank of government doctrine.

The focus of media coverage – including in reports on the ongoing ethnic cleansing in parts of the West Bank – is currently on radical, messianic, and violent settlers and the Israeli army that supports them. These extreme actors are indeed the spearhead of a radicalised Jewish-Israeli society that is indifferent to the policies of occupation and expulsion. How and why has the ideology of Greater Israel become an openly articulated political principle?

### MILITARY RULE OVER PALESTINIANS

The occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip nearly sixty years ago came as no surprise. Two factors were decisive: firstly, the conviction prevalent in large parts of the Zionist movement that they were superior to the indigenous Palestinians, and secondly, the desire that had existed since 1948 across

party lines, and even at high military levels, to expand the territory of the State of Israel to encompass the whole of "Greater Israel," that is historic Palestine.

The 1967 war, through which Israel took military control of the Gaza Strip from Egypt and the West Bank from Jordan, was not a turning point in this respect, but rather a catalyst for the Greater Israel policy. In the decades that followed, this policy of territorial expansion was supported by all Israeli governments and increasingly emphasised.

### IDEOLOGY TO POLICY

In 2018, the Israeli parliament passed the so-called Nation-State Bill ("Israel – the Nation-State of the Jewish People"). It was simultaneously elevated to one of the "basic laws" in the Israeli legal system. The first sentence of the law reads, "The Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish People, in which the State of Israel was established. The State of Israel is the nation state of the Jewish People in which it realises its natural, cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination. The realisation of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is exclusive to the Jewish People."

The current Minister of Finance and Minister of Administrative Affairs for the West Bank, Bezalel Smotrich, played a key role in drafting this law. Smotrich, himself a settler, is regarded in parliament as the strategist behind the success of the "Greater Israel movement."

A year earlier, in September 2017, when he was already vice president of the Knesset, Smotrich published a document entitled "The Decisive Plan." In it, he bluntly presents his vision of a State of Israel between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, which would require the annexation of all territories previously occupied by Israel. He argues that there needs to be practical and political awareness that "there is room for only one expression of national self-determination west of the Jordan River: that of the Jewish nation."

Without an in-depth, self-critical examination of the notions of Jewish superiority that exist even within the liberal Zionist camp, no transformation directed towards the self-determination of both peoples is conceivable.

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (edited for space) ✨

Letters to the Editor  
 The Guardian  
 74 Buckingham Street  
 Surry Hills NSW 2010  
 email: editor@cpa.org.au



**Lawless prosecution**

President Nicolás Maduro, and his wife Cilia Flores, have been held by the US judicial system after being kidnapped and transferred to the United States. He was arraigned on 5 January 2026 and pleaded not guilty to multiple drug-trafficking and narco-terrorism charges. The Maduros are being held in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, New York, in solitary confinement, reportedly to protect him from potential hostile Venezuelan detainees.

Maduro and his lawyers have told a US court that he cannot afford to pay for his legal defence as he cannot access funds from Venezuela to pay lawyers, as the main source of money (the Venezuelan state) is blocked by US sanctions. The court did not accept this argument as grounds to stop the trial, as Maduro and his wife can be represented by a state-provided lawyer.

The US Treasury initially allowed

Venezuela to pay his legal fees, but this was soon revoked. As a result, banks and lawyers cannot legally accept Venezuelan government money to pay for his defence. His lawyer, Barry Pollack, argues that under Venezuelan law, the state should pay his legal costs. Blocking this money violates Maduro's right to choose his own lawyer. His lawyer asked the court to dismiss the case on that basis.

Under US law Maduro cannot be denied a lawyer, if he has no accessible funds, he would be assigned a court-appointed public defender. This means he may not get the lawyer he wants as legal representation. So far, the judge has refused to dismiss the case over this issue, and the trial will proceed even if funding is unresolved.

His legal team has stated Cilia Flores has health issues requiring attention. During the capture operation, she reportedly suffered possible rib damage and bruising. The conditions in the Detention Center are not conducive to her good health.

Maduro's capture and detention are highly controversial. Critics argue the US violated international law by seizing a sitting head of state. Maduro himself has described himself as a 'prisoner of war.' Maduro and Flores should be released and given proper legal representation.

Graham Holton

**Lunatic ways**

I grew up in the 1960s and 70s as a student and became active against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, as well as opposing

**Something to say?**  
**Write to the Editor!**  
 editor@cpa.org.au

**Conscription, Apartheid, oppressive military regimes, and colonial wars.**

So I lived through the time of the US led intervention and horrific carpet bombing of Vietnam, (and Laos and Cambodia), which was a genocide that left an estimated 4 million Vietnamese dead, millions more injured by bombs, Napalm, Agent Orange and other atrocities. I never got over that brutal war.

Over the following decades I saw the Palestine genocide, with the latest stage in Gaza as well as genocides in Bosnia, Rwanda, East Timor, as well as wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Cyprus, Syria, Kurdistan, Kashmir, Eritrea, among many others.

Today terrible conflicts rage in Iran, Palestine, Lebanon, Myanmar, Ukraine, Sudan, West Papua, Western Sahara and the Congo. It seems to me, that my entire life this world has never been normal, decent and respectful of people, the planet or other life, but a place of death and devastation, ruled by sick leaders who profit from misery and suffering.

Until humanity rids itself of its barbaric ways we will never know any real peace or justice.

Steven Katsineris

**GOOD PLACE TO START**

(an occasional series for the beginning communist and the communism-curious)

**Blackshirts and Reds by Michael Parenti**

Peter Farmer

Michael Parenti passed away in January this year. There was an outpouring of affectionate mourning from socialists, many of whom grew up on Parenti's books and lectures (the CPA used to have a library of cassette recordings of his talks. See Guardian #2178, 9 February 2026 for more).

Often cited as the best place to begin for people interested in understanding communism, *Blackshirts and Reds*, by Michael Parenti is a penetrating antidote to conventional understanding of the topic. Parenti shows in detail that communism in Eastern Europe did not simply fall over because "socialism doesn't work," but in fact was subjected to constant external pressure. Parenti also looks at what happened next, the horrendous toll taken by the "free market victory" that followed the collapse of the Eastern Bloc states and the Soviet Union.

The book also takes a fresh view of fascism and argues that far from being an aberration, fascism is an outcome of capitalism – it pays service to capitalism in times of crisis.

*Blackshirts and Reds* is a useful and very readable introduction to the idea of class analysis in understanding the realities of politics as practiced in the USA and western countries in general. Written in Parenti's usual energetic, lucid and informative style, it's a good place to start. ✨



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- Sydney's trams won't have sensors because this is more important than human lives (5)
- KMT leader has called for peaceful (11)
- Accused Chilean torturer has been extradited from (9)
- Harming South Australian health, climate change-related (10)
- Albo won't do this to gambling ads (3)

# Worth watching: TV for the working class

## Review of *Can You Keep a Secret* and *Sunny Nights*

Dennis Broe

**In a television landscape where working-class-centred series are few and far between, here are two that present the trials and tribulations of that class as well as their antagonism to the class above.**

The better and clearer of the two is the BBC sitcom *Can You Keep a Secret*, which begins with its major secret, kept by an elderly West Britain village couple, revealed to their law-abiding son. The secret is that the son's father, whom he presumed was dead, has faked his death, and the couple, led by *Absolute Fabulous*' Dawn French as Debbie Fendon, is now pocketing the insurance and state money from his demise.

Their working-class logic, outlined by Debbie, for what the law would term fraud, is impeccable. Her husband has Parkinson's disease, which the insurance company told them it would not cover. So, she says, after a lifetime of paying their taxes, following the rules and never getting arrested, "what have we got to show for it? A dingy house in the middle of nowhere with a dodgy boiler and a garden full of fox shit."

All this hints at the desperation of the tail end of life for a class that is on its last legs. Fraud is as good a recourse as any to survive. Dawn French's exuberant elder in this series is the equivalent in this television season of Kathy Bates' lawyer avenging her daughter's death facilitated by a corporate law firm in last season's *Matlock*.

Both series deal in a highly dignified way with the aged, the detritus of capitalism, and with the problems and the triumphs of that age group, attempting not to be forgotten, and in the parents' example, full also of sexual energy.

What does Debbie do with her (in her mind) not ill-gotten gains? One thing she does is give it back to the community in the form of a donation to a cultural centre for her town, which, like many others in Keir Starmer's austerity Britain, is starved for funds to support communal activities.

Unfortunately, the series, as the episodes move along, loses its focus on aging and centres on a blackmail plot. It is hoped in season two that the original focus will return.

More complicated and in a way more damning is Australian streamer Stan's series, with two Americans in the lead, *Sunny Nights*. Will Forte (*The Last Man on Earth*) stars as one half of a brother-sister duo, Marvin and

Vicki Martin, who, in their attempt to launch a suntan, sunscreen company, inadvertently get involved with a group of low-level Australian mobsters and con artists.

The trick here, which the series only partially acknowledges, is that the US upper-middle-class entrepreneurs are more ruthless than the gangsters, who, despite their crimes, are solidly rooted in a working-class Australian milieu. Martin is conned and then blackmailed, but it is Vicki who deals the murderous blow to the gangster who is threatening them. Vicki is at first the more ruthless of the two, wanting to blow up a rival company's stock but eventually it's Martin who becomes a real killer after an inspiring talking to from a business coach. It's a bit *American Psycho*.

When they acquire some money from the business, Vicki wants to spend it on herself rather than put it back in the company, as at a higher level. US CEOs don't invest in innovation but instead splurge on their own extravagant lifestyles.

The better part of the series, though, and truly a wonder to behold, is the range of working-class low-lives who populate not only the washed-up amusement park they use as a loan-shark and blackmail cover but also other walks of life. There is Suze, who lures men into the honey trap, but who really wants to break free of this life and buy a motel she can share with her disabled father. Mony, whose violent rage owes to loyalty to her murdered brother, explains that the battered amusement park was where the two used to play as kids.

There's ex-rugby player turned enforcer, Terry who desperately needs money for an operation to save his life after a game injury. The rotund pest control female officer, who aspires to be a journalist-detective, and many more. The series is a veritable instruction manual on how to create a range of varied characters by tying them to their working-class backgrounds.

Inadvertently, it also functions as a critique of the ruthlessness of the famed US entrepreneurial impulse, which in one instance sees businesswoman Vicki steal the money that rugby player Terry needs for the operation that may save his life.

This savagery is disguised under well-worn corporate clichés like "help us help you," and "if we succeed you succeed," an ethos even adopted by the gangsters as one of them, trying to get out of their life of crime, says, "I'm looking for an exit from my current employment situation."

*People's World* 🇺🇸



*Can You Keep a Secret*



*Sunny Nights*

## Worth Streaming: *Small Prophets*

FK

**In a world full of series that go on and on until even the people making them don't want to watch anymore, there's a charm in a short series that just ends quickly, so it's no discredit to Mackenzie Crook's *Small Prophets* when I say that I really hope there isn't a second season. As it is, this show is a delight, and I hope the 'to be continued' at the end is just teasing.**

On one level, it doesn't seem charming at all. Michael (Pearce Quigley) has a super-boring job at a British Bunnings-like home-ware store. There's nothing to like about the job, and his home life is very dull. Michael's girlfriend vanished seven years before the show begins. His underemployed and nosy neighbours would get on anyone's wick. Michael goes to his boring

job, where he winds up customers by talking nonsense, and avoids the stale wit of his equally miserable workmates. All is alienation in a Britain where working people just get by without any solidarity or cheer.

His father has dementia and is in an aged care home. Mackenzie Crook, whose show it is, restricts himself to a part very similar to the one he played in the original British version of *The Office*; he's the creepy, overserious middle manager who tries in vain to boss Michael around.

You might conclude that the only thing to get out of *Small Prophets* is that you're glad you don't live in the UK and work in a British Bunnings, think again! On another level, all is life-affirming charm. The dementia sufferer, father, played by very lovable Michael Palin, introduces his son to alchemy. Michael starts to make homunculi, the 'prophets' of the title,

in jars, helped by workmate Kacey (Lauren Patel) who dreams of being in *Neighbours*. Will the 'prophets' survive the people next door?

Without spoiling it for you, I can say that the show delivers a sort of happy ending, but not a predictable one. It holds back from the big 'everybody wins' outcome Hollywood likes so much. Also, the scenes where Michael trolls the customers are funny (he convinces one man that buckets are a thing of the past, while standing in front of a wall of buckets).

There's even a kind of happy ending for the alienated kid who just rides his bike around Michael's house "like a caged animal" as Kacey observes.

Before you know it, *Small Prophets* is over. It doesn't leave this viewer wanting more, but it does leave me very glad I saw it.

*Small Prophets* is streaming on Apple TV 🇺🇸



# Resist Netanyahu's evil plans!

## Statement from the Tudeh party of Iran

**The criminal attacks by the Netanyahu government against Lebanon after the announcement of a ceasefire between the United States and the Islamic Republic, with the clear aim of disrupting the peace talks in the region, have drawn a wide wave of international condemnation.**

According to world news agencies and Israeli military spokesmen, the country carried out 100 airstrikes on Lebanon last night, killing more than 250 people and injuring about 1,200. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun described the attacks as a "massacre," and European Union foreign policy chief Kaya Kallas said: "Israeli actions are putting great pressure on the ceasefire between the United States and Iran. The ceasefire with Iran must be extended to Lebanon."

The leaders of the Islamic Republic, while condemning these crimes of the Israeli government, announced the start of peace talks conditional on the establishment of a

ceasefire in Lebanon. Baqaei, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that, as the Prime Minister of Pakistan has also stated, the cessation of fighting on the Lebanese front is one of the components of the ceasefire understanding between Iran and the United States, and today's crimes by the Zionist regime against Lebanon are a clear violation of this understanding.

Masoud Pezzekian, President of Iran, also called the latest Israeli attacks on Lebanon "a clear violation of the initial ceasefire agreement" and said: "Iran will never leave Lebanese sisters and brothers alone." Mr Pezzekian also called the Israeli attacks "a dangerous sign of deception and non-compliance with possible agreements" on the social network X.

The Netanyahu government, which has been condemned by international organisations for crimes and genocide, is the greatest threat to peace and tranquillity in the Middle East and the world, with the aim of

establishing Israel as a "regional superpower." The Netanyahu government's policy is to continue the war and destruction and expand its scope to Iran, with the aim of destroying our homeland and implementing the policy of regime change and bringing mercenaries like Reza Pahlavi to power.

The Tudeh Party of Iran, while reiterating that the declaration of a ceasefire can be a step towards achieving lasting peace, believes that all efforts must be made to resist the evil plans of the Netanyahu government to disrupt the ceasefire and drag Iran and the United States into a widespread and devastating war. Our homeland has suffered extensive human and financial losses during the forty days of continuous bombing by American imperialism and the Israeli government, the continuation of which could be catastrophic for the country's future.

**Tudeh Party of Iran,  
April 10, 14**



## Iran threatens all Gulf ports

**Tehran has threatened all ports in the Gulf in retaliation for the US military blockade on Iran's ports as negotiation talks failed.**

Marathon talks in Pakistan, aimed at permanently ending the war that began in February with US and Israeli strikes on Iran, did not reach an agreement.

There has been no word on whether negotiations will resume.

The US's restrictions, which include "the entirety of the Iranian coastline, including ports and energy infrastructure," were expected to begin on 14 April.

It was not immediately clear if they had kicked off.

The US military's Central Command announced that the blockade would be enforced "against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas."

It said that it would include all of Iran's ports on the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 per cent of traded oil passes normally, has sent oil prices skyrocketing, leaving world leaders panicking and ordinary people facing soaring costs.

In a social media message posted shortly after the blockade was due to begin, US President Donald Trump said Iran's navy was "laying at the bottom of the sea, completely obliterated." He also said that Tehran still has "fast attack ships," and warned that "if any of these ships come anywhere close to our blockade, they will be immediately eliminated."

Iran issued threats of its own, broadcasting: "Security in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman is either for everyone or for no-one.

"No port in the region will be safe."

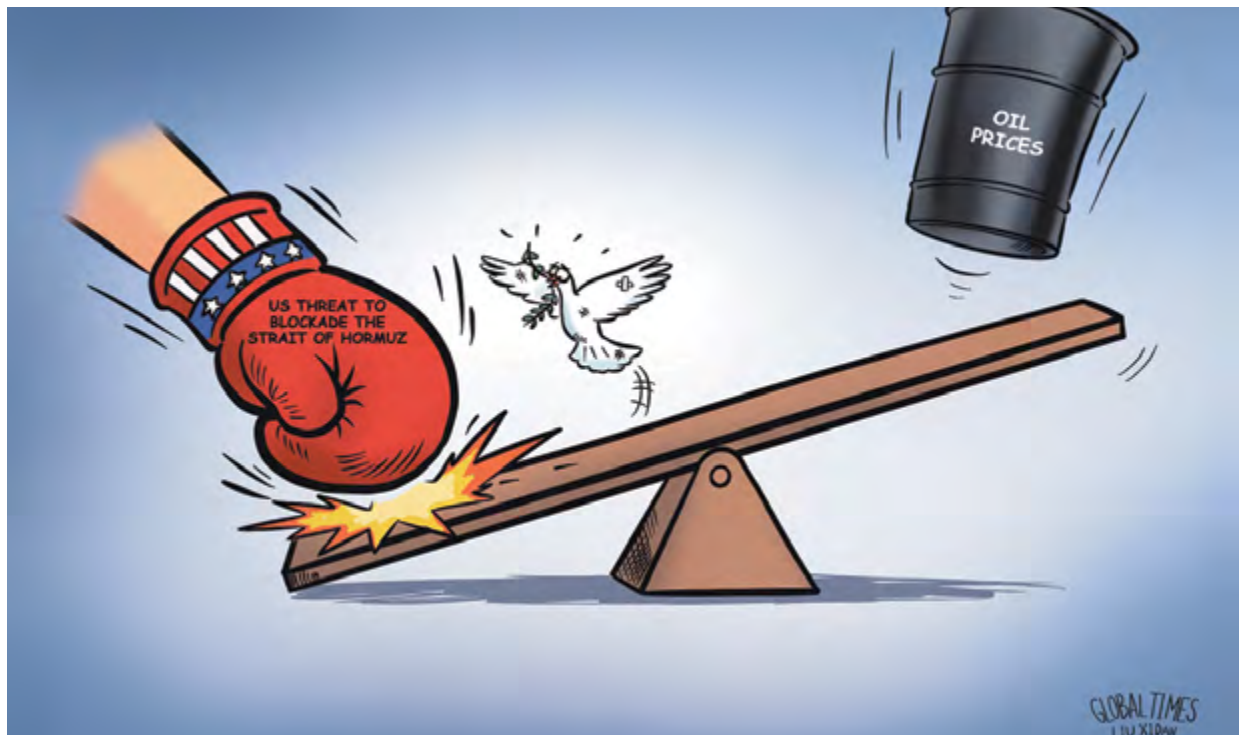
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has come under domestic criticism for the inconclusive outcome of the country's aggressions across the region, expressed support for Trump's "strong stance to impose a naval blockade on Iran."

In Spain, where Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has been Europe's loudest critic of US and Israeli military attacks in the Middle East, Defence Minister Margarita Robles slammed the blockade.

"Since the war began, everything has been senseless," Robles told Spanish broadcaster TVE.

She said the threatened blockade "is just another episode of the downward spiral we have been dragged into."

Morning Star



## No port in the region will be safe

## Mexico's socialist president to roll out universal healthcare

Joshua Carroll

**Mexico's 120 million citizens will begin to enjoy free, universal access to healthcare from next year, following a decree by socialist president Claudia Sheinbaum.**

The landmark policy will unify a fragmented and unequal system that has left many unable to receive care at certain hospitals and clinics, forcing them instead

to use only what their insurance provider covers.

In theory, Mexico's sprawling network of public health institutions should provide most people with coverage, but in practice poorer people and those in rural communities often cannot get the medicines or treatment they need without out-of-pocket expenses. Private health insurance, meanwhile, fills the gap, creating a two-tier system based on income.

The first phase of the new universal system began on 13 April, with citizens aged 85 and older eligible to register for the ID needed to access care. From January 2027, healthcare institutions will start working together to bridge gaps in access to care.

Since coming to power in 2024, Sheinbaum has sought to undo decades of damage caused by neoliberal policies, building on the work of the previous socialist government.

She has pledged to build 1.8m new homes to tackle a housing shortage while strengthening tenants' rights.

Last year she announced plans to shorten the work week from 48 hours to 40 hours, while increasing the minimum wage by 13%, continuing a policy of regular hikes championed by her predecessor and mentor Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador since 2018.

"For years it was said that the minimum wage couldn't go up,"

she told a conference in December, "that it would cause inflation, that there would no longer be investment in the country, foreign investment."

Despite that, following a cumulative minimum wage increase of 154% since 2018, "we are at a record level of foreign investment," she added.

Novara Media

# Taiwan: a move towards peaceful dialogue

Maximus M

**In early April this year, Taiwanese Opposition Chairwoman of the Kuomintang (KMT), Cheng Li-wun, travelled to mainland China (PRC) to meet with President Xi Jinping. This is a significant event between both countries towards better and more peaceful relations.**

While Cheng Li-wun isn't the President of Taiwan (ROC) she is the Chairwoman of the opposition to the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The KMT compared to its counterpart DPP, acknowledges the 1992 Consensus. That means it recognises that Taiwan is part of China, but doesn't have a position on who should govern China, summed up as "one China, different interpretations."

The DPP, in power since its victory in 2016, has shifted closer towards the United States and increasingly uses separatist rhetoric, calling Taiwan no longer Chinese.

Cheng Li-wun's visit to the mainland comes at a time of heightened tension. In December 2025, Taiwan launched its largest military drill yet. There has been an ongoing debate about military spending on the island as the DPP administration seeks to increase Taiwan's defence budget by \$56 billion AUD. At the time, Cheng Li-wun commented that "if cross-strait relations are peaceful and stable, we don't need a pointless arms race." Her visit to the mainland shows a clear alternative, that peace can be established across the Taiwanese Straits.

"In Taiwan we must do everything possible to prevent war. At the same time, we should seize every opportunity to strengthen the foundations of peace," says Cheng Li-wun.

Taiwan finds itself in a difficult position, not only geographically but also politically. Taiwan has been in recent years played both sides between China and the United States.

According to the latest polling, more than 80% of Taiwanese people want the status quo, while 6.1% want unification with China now. Nobody wants a war, either in



A park in the shadow of Taipei 101, Xinyi District, Taipei, Taiwan.  
Photo: metrotrekker.com (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Taiwan or on the Chinese mainland. However, this hasn't stopped steady pressure from US and Japanese diplomats on the island of Taiwan to adopt increasingly antagonistic policies and posturing towards China.

The Kuomintang Party recognises this situation that its country is in. Hence Cheng Li-wun's visit to China. It's becoming apparent that the United States is trying to use Taiwan as a proxy as with Ukraine. Cheng Li-wun has asked, "Does Taiwan want to become the next Ukraine?"

Over the last few years, the Western bourgeois media has been hamming the so-called "threat" of "Chinese Invasion" of the Island of Taiwan, but now even CNN admits that a 2027 invasion will not happen. This is exactly what China has been saying. China's policy is for peaceful unification, under a similar policy that China has with Hong Kong; one country, two systems.

Cheng Li-wun's visit to China, signals a shift in Taiwanese politics, a shift towards China and towards peaceful dialogue. 🇺🇸



## Global Briefs

**US:** President Donald Trump acknowledged in an interview that the United States had supplied weapons to anti-government protesters in Iran during recent January unrest. The munitions were funnelled through Kurdish groups. When the US and Israel illegally attacked Iran on 28 February, they hoped the Kurdish militants would join the attack on the ground. The United States and Israel were quite willing to sacrifice their proxies to achieve regime change, but this time they failed.

**INDIA:** Frequently described as "the world's largest democracy," India often takes pride in the massive logistics involved in national elections. Not so democratically, some nine million voters have been removed from electoral rolls in West Bengal. The removal is supposed to get rid of outdated or duplicate entries, but comments from Prime Minister Modi seem to aim at Muslim voters. 12% of voters have been removed. The disenfranchised can apply to be put back on the roll, but that won't happen until after the state election.

**YEMEN:** Yemen's Houthi rebels have carried out an attack against Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. It was the fifth major military operation by the group since joining the regional response to US and Israeli strikes on Iran. A Houthi military spokesman said the attack was motivated by support for resisting forces in Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine. He tied the action directly to a confrontation with what he described as a Zionist plan to establish a Greater Israel under the guise of a so-called New Middle East. He also stressed that the latest strike was a coordinated effort rather than an isolated act.

**GAZA:** The Palestinian Centre for Missing and Forcibly Disappeared Persons issued a strong warning about the escalating humanitarian crisis specifically impacting children. During 29 months of relentless Israeli attacks, 21,510 children were killed and over 8,000 children are missing. The centre also reported that about 200 minors have vanished without a trace in various parts of Gaza, raising strong suspicions of forced disappearances. The centre drew attention to the fact that thousands of children were still buried under the rubble. The centre urged the international community and the United Nations to adopt urgent, concrete measures, including the immediate opening of safe corridors to help with essential rescue operations, with all the necessary equipment and prompt independent investigations into all cases of forced disappearances. The plight of Gazan children highlights a total neglect of international law and demands of global condemnation. Those responsible for the atrocities committed against Gaza's civilians, including children, should stand trial as war criminals.

**HUNGARY:** Hungary, Russia, Turkey and Serbia agreed to strengthen protection of the TurkStream gas pipeline from possible attacks from Ukraine, the Hungarian Foreign Minister said after a meeting of Hungary's Defence Council. The agreement followed a sabotage attempt targeting gas infrastructure crucial for the country's and the region's energy supply. Serbian law enforcement agencies had discovered a cache of explosives near the gas pipeline connecting the country with Hungary. Markings on the explosives indicated they were manufactured in the US. Hungary views the incident as an attack on the country's sovereignty. The Srbija-gas director claimed that Hungary was the actual target, since Serbia would not have been left without gas.

**RUSSIA:** Russians have celebrated the 65th anniversary of the first human space flight. On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin successfully completed a historic 108-minute mission of orbiting the Earth. Since then Russia has celebrated Cosmonautics Day in honour of Gagarin's flight. In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared 12 April the International Day of Human Space Flight.

*Something to say?*  
Write to the Editor!



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# African Intelligence: The hidden exploitation behind AI

C Bartholomew

AI tools and platforms are often touted as bringers of automation. Companies discussing AI focus the conversation on digital elements such as machine learning, data sets, and algorithms. However, AI is more than just fancy software. It is a technology with physical impacts. The land, water, energy, and mineral demands of AI systems are gaining increasing attention in public debate. Another demand which is still largely hidden is the large number of underpaid, mostly African workers vital to processing the data behind AI.

## BEHIND THE CURTAIN

AI systems are, in fact, not artificial intelligence at all. These systems do not think, solve problems, or understand data. They are essentially more advanced versions of your phone's predictive text. AI systems are fed mountains of data, which they then use to produce a plausible output in response to a user's input. In other words, they take whatever is handed to them and create what it's most likely that the user wants to see based on patterns. This process of analysing data is not fully automated, but instead reliant upon thousands of human workers.

In countries such as Kenya, data labelling companies, subcontractors to big tech corporations such as Meta, Microsoft, and OpenAI, employ thousands of people to train AI systems. These data labellers, data annotators, or content moderators are paid a cent or two per task to label objects within images, transcribe audio, describe videos frame-by-frame, and perform other tasks essential for AIs to function. These workers are also used to verify responses and perform tasks AI struggles with – like scheduling appointments, and mitigate biases and disturbing

content. This last job is why many of these workers are regularly subjected to hour upon hour of graphic violence, child exploitation, and pornographic materials.

## PRIVACY

Users of AI systems may unknowingly be involved in these human processes. Some data labellers have reported that, while 'training' AI companions, chatbots, and sexbots, they were actually being made to sext with users in real time. Other labellers involved in processing data for Meta's AI glasses have reported seeing videos direct from users, including videos of people using the bathroom, having sex, or even showing private information such as credit card and banking details. Annotators – who have to verify the answers that Meta's glasses and other AI systems provide – report reading transcriptions about crime, protests, suicidal thoughts, and sexual fantasies.

Users may be told that they have a choice regarding which data is sent to companies and which is kept private, but the truth is that for the AI systems to work at all data must be sent to company data centres. If the data being sent to third party companies for labelling and training is sourced from these same centres, then it is unclear how user privacy can be preserved at all.

## SILENCE, INTIMIDATION

Rather than act responsibly or be held accountable, tech companies simply bully their hidden workforces into silence. Workers are often managed by algorithms, meaning they have no idea which big tech company they are working for. Labellers are made to sign brutal non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), while offices are under heavy surveillance. Michael Geoffrey Asia, secretary general of Kenya's Data Labellers Association (DLA), has described these NDAs as



Photo: publicdomainpictures.net (CC0)

“a slave tool used to enslave people to not speak about what they're going through.” The workers' low pay, disposability, and often poor access to services such as healthcare also encourages silent compliance. Human rights lawyer Mercy Mutemi has reported that when countries such as Kenya seek trade deals with the US they are pressured into providing immunity for big tech companies.

Organisations including the DLA have emerged as data labellers are increasingly speaking out against low pay, for an end to NDAs, and for mental health services for those workers subjected to violent, sexual,

and disturbing materials. AI companies rely on the public perception that their systems are fully automated. This lie not only helps attract investment, but it also obscures the reality that these systems depend on human labour.

AI has become the latest episode of imperialism, as tech companies exploit vulnerable workers in countries dependent on Western capital. These workers are the basis of AI companies' massive profits, yet they receive only the tiniest fraction of that wealth. AI's mystique is a purposeful façade to keep that reality secret. ✪

## Trump removes Little Bighorn Native American signage

Graham Holton

**The Trump administration has targeted signage displays at a national monument that honours tribal sacrifices and reflect the Indigenous history of the battle known as Custer's Last Stand at Montana's Little Bighorn. It follows what President Trump calls his restoration of “truth and sanity to American history” order.**

In reality, it is an attempt to silence important Indigenous perspectives from the historical narrative. It's part and parcel of an effort to erase non-white contributions to US history that has also seen the Pentagon take down images of high achieving Black service members.

The removal of signage concerning Indigenous perspectives has stirred strong emotions among Native American community members.

Northern Cheyenne President, Gene Small, said of the removal. “You know, the 2003 Indian Memorial at the battlefield was themed ‘Peace through Unity’ and it's ironic that today the Administration is sowing division and conflict.” The tribe sees the removal

as undermining decades of healing and unity. Northern Cheyenne Vice President, Ernest Littlemouth said, “This attempt to change or remove tribal markers and monuments dims the light of the healing and progress we have all made.” It is an attempt to remove the cultural importance of the recognition of Native history at the site. The Northern Cheyenne Council sees the removal of Native American interpretive context at historic sites as an erosion of tribal education, cultural continuity, and the recognition of long-standing agreements and experiences.

Kristen Brengel, senior vice president for government affairs at the National Parks Conservation Association, said the removal of park signs “is forcing National Park Service staff to censor everything from climate science at Glacier to the mistreatment of Native Americans at the Grand Canyon, a place of worship and origin for many Tribes.” Tribal history is tied to sacred landscapes and deserves accurate representation.

Indigenous women leaders have spoken out on historical erasure and injustice. Keianna Cachora, who works at the Custer Battlefield

Trading Post, told Montana's KTVQ: “It's disturbing, disgusting, and wrong. You should not erase other people's history because it makes you uncomfortable.” Lucy Real Bird, an educator at Crow Agency Public Schools, said: “We're still going to continue teaching our language, teaching our history, being who we are as Apsáalooke's, as Indigenous people, and the original people of this land”.

Suzan Shown Harjo, Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee advocate, has spent decades fighting for the accurate representation of Native history in public spaces and cultural institutions, and stands against the Trump administration's “sanitising” efforts.

Native American women are at the forefront of cultural preservation, education, and intergenerational history transmission in their communities. The removal of historical signage is seen as part of a pattern of erasure that echoes past efforts to suppress Indigenous languages, stories, and perspectives, which their leaders have long resisted through activism and policy advocacy. ✪

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# Latin America, the US and China

Graham Holton

**The 2026 National Defense Strategy report redefines the United States' role in the world, prioritising the Western Hemisphere as the forefront of its strategic concern. The US is signalling that the Americas, from Greenland to South America, are critical to its national security, stability, and political influence, with a renewed reliance on the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, which meant that the US regarded Latin America as its 'backyard.'**

The Middle East is no longer a primary theatre for the US grand strategy, instead it is a managed risk zone. Imported Middle Eastern oil is no longer essential to national security, but is needed to assure global price stability. Any disruption to Middle Eastern oil supplies has limited impact on US oil demands.

The US will prioritise hemispheric security as integral to national security, blurring the lines between domestic and regional defence. The US is reasserting its pre-eminence in the Western Hemisphere, asserting that no external military power will be tolerated if it is seen as undermining US security and influence in the region. Strategic objectives include energy integration, critical mineral cooperation, and reinforcing North American competitiveness.

Many governments in Latin America already view US political, economic and military pressure as reminiscent of historical interventionism, with this year seeing controversial military actions. Under operation

Southern Spear, the US expanded its naval presence in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific, deploying the largest US naval force in the region since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. This huge naval buildup was meant to strike small vessels said to be linked – without proof – to narcotics trafficking. It linked drug trafficking and “authoritarian rule” as a challenge to US regional dominance.

On 3 January this year, US forces kidnapped Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro and his wife. The operation convinced US leaders that regime change and direct force are viable instruments.

Washington's military objective is a zero tolerance of any Russian or Chinese military and naval presence in Cuba, or South America. China is seen as a long-term strategic rival, rather than a cooperative partner, with the US wanting to counter Chinese influence across Latin America and the Caribbean. After the US attack on Venezuela, China and Russia are recalibrating their strategies in Latin America, with China reconsidering the depth of its engagement in the region.

US hemispheric influence is a blend of assertive security measures, reoriented diplomatic priorities, and economic integration. This strategy is driven by a desire to secure US borders, challenge rival powers, and ensure regional stability, but raises complex questions about international law, regional autonomy, and long-term regional cooperation. After 3 January other countries will have mixed feelings about the US and its 'Department of War.' ✪



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### Editorial Office

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
 Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833  
 Email: [guardian@cpa.org.au](mailto:guardian@cpa.org.au)

Editor:

**Floyd Kermode**

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## **Impact**

Don't call the Reserve Bank of Australia cold-hearted. If interest rises are hurting you, the RBA's assistant governor feels your pain. Well, let's not get carried away, the assistant governor has admitted that rising costs will "impact some borrowers." This is true as far as it goes. For a lot of working Australians, the rising costs will 'impact' them the way Vesuvius impacted the people of Pompeii.

## **Gutter politics**

Gutter politics is low and dirty and a very bad thing. For Pauline Hanson this term means other politicians criticising her for employing a convicted rapist, telling lies about Aboriginal people, or basing a political party on racism. If you're Pauline Hanson, those things are above the gutter somewhere, presumably just on the edge of the footpath.

## **Genuine**

The *Australian Financial Review* is fretting that with all this economic uncertainty the Albanese government is about to bottle it on "genuine" economic reform. If you think they mean taxing gas corporations that don't pay any royalties or tax, you must be new here. For the bosses' paper, 'genuine' means introducing means-testing to the NDIS.

## **Ballooning**

No, we're not talking about the hobby of those people who like to bob about in hot-air balloons. This ballooning refers to what spending on the NDIS does if the speaker is someone who wants to cut the NDIS. It's a transitive adjective: if you're neutral about spending, it's 'increasing', if you're in favour of it, it's 'improving' or maybe 'ramping up.' People lobbying for military spending call it an 'investment' which is 'thriving'. Meanwhile the NDIS, a program which helps people with disabilities to work and otherwise contribute to the community just gets to balloon.

## **Persecution**

That's what former PM Tony Abbott calls the prosecution of Ben Roberts-Smith. Most people know what persecution means, but for Abbott it means charging someone with murder when there's good reason to think they've committed murder. Abbott also said it was wrong "to judge the actions of men in mortal combat by the standards of ordinary civilian life," which is a really long-winded way of saying that murder doesn't count if you do it when you're in the army.

## **Staying the course**

This is normally a good thing to do. It's implied that the person staying the course is sticking with a worthwhile course of action in the face of difficulty. In the hands of Arthur Sinodonis, former Liberal MP and ambassador to the US, 'staying the course' means sticking with the AUKUS deal even though it's ruinously expensive and will make Australia less safe. We should stay the course on AUKUS because doing so will somehow commit the US to defending Australia from an 'assertive' China. This despite Trump's recent demonstrations that alliances mean nothing to him.

Before he moved onto his ambassador job, Sinodonis was famous for answering every question asked by a Royal Commission with "I don't remember" (his nickname was 'see-no-donors' because of all the dodgy donors he couldn't remember). We wonder if he's forgotten more accurate expressions for AUKUS, like "throwing good money after bad".

## **Look at**

British shadow defence secretary James Cartlidge has said the quiet part out loud by asking for cuts in social welfare to make room for more military spending. Cartlidge said that the UK needs to "look at the welfare budget in order to prioritise the defence of our country." He means "savagely the welfare budget," but "look at" sounds as though they're going to think about it first.

# China and Cuba's solar revolution: solidarity in practice

Carlos Martinez

**When the lights go out in Havana – as they have done for up to 20 hours a day in the worst months of Cuba's current energy crisis – the causes are not difficult to identify.**

The United States' economic blockade, in place since 1962 and systematically tightened under successive administrations, has cost Cuba an estimated \$160 billion (\$2 trillion in current prices, equivalent to around 20 years of Cuba's annual GDP).

The latest escalation of this cruel and illegal blockade has involved a full-scale energy embargo, with the US attempting to completely cut off Cuba's access to oil.

The kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro three months ago resulted in the severing of by far Cuba's most important energy supplier.

Trump's tariff threats then forced Mexico to cancel emergency oil shipments.

The result has been blackouts, fuel shortages and severe disruption to daily life across the island. The Trump regime is following the Kissinger playbook of "making the economy scream" in order to force regime change.

Life is unquestionably being made difficult. As a Cuban hairdresser told Medea Benjamin of CodePink in February: "You can't imagine how it touches every part of our lives. With no gasoline, buses don't run, so we can't get to work. We have electricity only three to six hours a day. There's no gas for cooking, so we're burning wood and charcoal in our apartments. It's like going back 100 years."

Thankfully, at the end of March, a Russian tanker carrying an estimated 730,000 barrels of crude oil docked in Havana, providing some urgently needed relief. But Cuba's energy import situation continues to be highly precarious and uncertain.

## NOBODY CAN BLOCKADE THE SUN

The Cuban people's response to this siege has not been surrender. It has been transformation – and

at the heart of that transformation is a remarkable programme of solar energy development, driven by one of the most significant acts of international solidarity in the history of the global green transition.

China's support for the Cuban renewable energy programme has accelerated dramatically in recent years. Chinese solar exports to Cuba rose from US\$5 million in 2023 to \$117m in 2025. A report in the *Financial Times* on 6 April notes that "thanks to Chinese technology, the Caribbean island has 34 solar parks in operation with a capacity of almost 1.2 gigawatts (GW), a 350 per cent increase on 2024, enabling Cuba to more than quadruple its proportion of solar-powered generation by the end of last year."

Beijing has committed to building 92 solar parks in Cuba by 2028, with a combined capacity of approximately 2GW – equivalent to Cuba's entire current fossil fuel generation capacity. The solar parks already connected to the grid are contributing 1GW. As a result, Cuba's share of solar in total electricity generation has risen from 5.8 per cent a year ago to over 20 per cent today. Energy analysts have described this as one of the most rapid solar transitions ever achieved by a developing nation.

Cuba has set official targets of generating 24 per cent of its electricity from renewables by 2030, rising to 40 per cent by 2035 and 100 per cent by 2050. At the current pace of buildout, the 2030 target looks well within reach – and may be exceeded considerably sooner.

Battery storage – currently in place at only four of Cuba's 55 solar parks – will need to be expanded significantly to address the evening peak demand. Wind energy will also make a growing contribution, with 19 wind farms totalling 415 MW currently being built, again with Chinese support. But the pace of the solar buildout, measured against where Cuba was just months ago, is already extraordinary.

## SUPPORT AT ALL LEVELS

China's contribution extends beyond large-scale infrastructure. Beijing has also donated 10,000



Solar panels in Cuba's "Cuchillas del Toa" biosphere reserve. Photo: International Rivers – flickr.com (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

photovoltaic systems for deployment in isolated rural homes and critical facilities – including maternity wards and health clinics – ensuring that medical equipment can continue to function and medicines can be refrigerated even during power cuts.

A further 5,000 solar kits have been installed in health centres across 168 municipalities, each comprising panels, inverters, and storage batteries. The head of Cuba's Electric Union described the household-level systems as life-changing: enabling families to run a refrigerator, a fan and a television, and reducing the rural-to-urban migration that energy poverty drives.

Furthermore, in January 2026, President Xi Jinping personally approved \$80 million in emergency financial aid for electrical equipment, alongside a donation of 60,000 tons of emergency rice aid.

China has been involved in Cuba's energy sector for many years – supplying wind turbines since 2018, providing electric buses through Yutong since 2005, and supporting the assembly of Chinese electric cars, scooters and bicycles

in Cuba through the Caribbean Electric Vehicles (VEDCA) program.

In 2021, Cuba joined the Belt and Road Energy Partnership, the Chinese-led international framework for clean energy investment. But the current program represents a qualitative leap, driven in large part by the urgency of Cuba's situation and the depth of the bilateral relationship.

As Chinese ambassador Hua Xin stated at the handover ceremony for a recent tranche of solar parks: China stands with Cuba in "firm support under all circumstances." Cuban Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy stated that the co-operation between the two socialist countries represents "a joint commitment to energy sovereignty."

## SOCIALIST SOLIDARITY

What is taking shape in Cuba is a demonstration, in the most concrete terms, of what South-South co-operation and socialist solidarity look like in practice: China is providing technology, financing, expertise, training and humanitarian

assistance to a country under siege, with no conditionalities, no structural adjustment requirements, no demand for market access.

Hugo Chávez once described the flourishing ties between progressive Latin America and China as a "Great Wall against US hegemonism." Cuba's solar revolution is a powerful example of that wall in action.

Fidel Castro said in 2004 that China had become "the most promising hope and the best example for all Third World countries." Two decades later, the US is raining bombs on Iranian civilian infrastructure, tightening its cruel blockade on Cuba, kidnapping Venezuela's elected president, and supporting an ongoing genocide in Gaza.

China meanwhile is emerging as the major trading partner of the vast majority of global South nations; has become the world's only renewable energy superpower; and consistently demonstrates its commitment to peace, international law and global prosperity.

Fidel's assessment looks more prescient than ever.

*Morning Star* ✶

## Trump is following the Kissinger playbook of 'making the economy scream'



## Communist Party of Australia

[www.cpa.org.au](http://www.cpa.org.au)

[cpa@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpa@cpa.org.au)

### Head Office (Sydney)

74 Buckingham St,  
Surry Hills, NSW 2010  
phone: 02 9699 8844  
email: [info@cpa.org.au](mailto:info@cpa.org.au)

### General Secretary

Andrew Irving  
[andrew@cpa.org.au](mailto:andrew@cpa.org.au)

### Party President

Vinnie Molina  
[president@cpa.org.au](mailto:president@cpa.org.au)

Media [guardian@cpa.org.au](mailto:guardian@cpa.org.au)  
[amr@cpa.org.au](mailto:amr@cpa.org.au)

### Canberra

[act@cpa.org.au](mailto:act@cpa.org.au) PO Box 35 Dickson ACT 2602

### Darwin

Vinnie Molina [darwin@cpa.org.au](mailto:darwin@cpa.org.au) 0419 812 872

### Melbourne

Andrew Irving [cpavic@cpa.org.au](mailto:cpavic@cpa.org.au)

Box 3 Trades Hall, Lygon St, Carlton Sth, Vic 3053

### NSW State Comm

Christian Goopy [nsw@cpa.org.au](mailto:nsw@cpa.org.au) 02 9699 8844

74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010

### Perth

Elly Hulm [perth@cpa.org.au](mailto:perth@cpa.org.au) 0421 113 343

PO Box 98, North Perth, WA 6906

### Qld State Comm

0499 476 540 [qld@cpa.org.au](mailto:qld@cpa.org.au)

### SA State Comm

[sa@cpa.org.au](mailto:sa@cpa.org.au) 0411 805 356 PO Box 56, Royal Park, SA 5014

### Tasmania

Andrew Irving [tas@cpa.org.au](mailto:tas@cpa.org.au) 03 9639 1550

