



# Punching down on the jobless

M Santos

**The present privatised Workforce Australia system is cruel and punitive, failing the unemployed as opportunistic, private for-profit rorters milk it. The Albanese Labor government's planned reforms are a thinly disguised cost-cutting exercise that fails to address the key failings of the current system – privatisation and mutual obligation requirements.**

The Keating Labor government introduced private providers alongside the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) and sowed the seeds for mutual obligation.

Then in 1998 the Howard Coalition abolished the CES, ending the government's responsibility to serve the unemployed, and outsourced all employment services to private operators. Centrelink and Job Network, a market of competing private organisations took over. The Mutual Obligation policy was punitive as if those receiving unemployment benefits chose not to work – the dole-bludger myth.

Since then the system has undergone a number of iterations until today we have the totally privatised system called Workforce Australia and a highly automated Mutual Obligation (MO) program that contains built-in provisions paying providers handsomely to keep the unemployed on their books.

The system is failing the unemployed and costing millions of dollars that are syphoned off in profits. According to Employment and Workplace Relations Minister Amanda Rishworth, 20% or more of Workforce Australia's one million unemployed participants have been stuck in the system for five years or more.

## ONE-SIDED OBLIGATIONS

Rishworth has made it clear that the Mutual Obligation policy would remain in place. Mutual obligations are "job-readying activities," such

as short courses, traineeships and volunteer work, that people on Centrelink payments such as JobSeeker and Youth Allowance need to complete to continue receiving support. There is nothing mutual about the obligations.

Failure or deemed failure (by the automated digital system) results in suspension of benefits and other financial penalties causing considerable stress and desperation to the job seeker.

Providers are known to concentrate on those who are easiest to place in work, or to force workers into unsuitable, lower-paid or lower-skilled jobs in order to maximise government payments and hence profits.

Last year the Commonwealth Ombudsman found almost 1,000 jobseekers had payments unlawfully terminated over a two-year period under the automated Targeted Compliance Framework that was set up to monitor mutual obligations.

"The very low rate of unemployment payments in Australia, combined with uncapped suspensions and the threat of payment cancellations, suggests the Australian regime violates the right to subsist," a review by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) found.

The review found that the system has failed on all fronts including alleviating poverty and adhering to human rights obligations, in particular the right to social security.

"We have also been alarmed about the multiple negative impacts of mutual obligation policy on the health and wellbeing of people affected. In our work as national anti-poverty advocates, we have consistently heard people's accounts of the distress, anxiety, shame and hardship people experience as a result of the impact of mutual obligation policies," ACOSS noted.

Rishworth has outlined the government's plans for the unemployed to be triaged into three streams:

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Photo: pickpik.com

## It's not a major overhaul if you keep 'mutual' obligations in place. That's punishment-as-usual.

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# Guardian

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## Feeling classy?

**“Dishonest and class-based.” That was the verdict of *Australian Financial Review* columnist Phil Coorey on the recent Federal Budget. Coorey didn’t explain what he meant by ‘class-based’, but he didn’t need to. The Budget was about to mildly inconvenience people with money (see *Guardian* #2190, 18 May). Annoying the well-off is ‘class-based.’ So what’s the deal with ‘class’?**

**In Australian politics, talking about class is very rude indeed. It’s mainly done in a negative way. If a politician mentions “class warfare,” they’re calling out a kind of blasphemy or at least very bad manners. Australia is supposed to be a classless society where anyone can make it. We’re proud of our informality. A Qantas safety instruction video shows a cheerful Australian traveller getting into the front seat of a New York cab, whereupon the driver says “you must be Australian.”**

**Class is like ‘ideology.’ Both are used as a slur, but the fact is everyone is in a class, and everyone has an ideology.**

**Talk of class is meant to be a bad thing because, for mainstream Australian politics, classes and socialism are meant to be a thing of the past. Labor sees its job as managing capitalism and making the system nice enough to survive.**

**Here at the *Guardian*, we dare to blaspheme. Classes are a fact of life. Your class is where you are in the system we live under at the moment. There’s nothing natural or inevitable about that system, although it’s very strong and will take a lot of work to change.**

**If you work to survive, you’re working class. If other people work for you and you live off the profit, you’re bourgeois (that word popularly means ‘comfortable,’ but for socialists it means owning the economy, not just having some nice stuff). Our society is organised in the interests of the bourgeois, who are the minority.**

**Class isn’t cut and dried – it’s not as though you’re put into a uniform at birth and told ‘you are in class X.’ Working class people can own shares or property. People can move from one class to another. This doesn’t happen as often as you might think (a lot of ‘rags to riches’ stories in Australian media are really ‘riches to more riches’ stories).**

**The trick our society plays on us is perpetrating the myth that we are fundamentally equal and anyone can ‘make it,’ encouraging us to think we’re all potential billionaires going through a bad patch. Ironically, the less equal a society is, the more likely people are to believe that anyone can make it. We know this is a trick because we’re in a society which works for the people who own the means of production. If you don’t believe that, take a look at the subsidies fossil fuel corporations get. Have a look at the paper Phil Coorey works for, the *Australian Financial Review*. A recent editorial argues that billionaire barons have “every right” to use their money to influence us. The *AFR*, owned by Nine media, consistently argues for tax breaks for the rich, as do the Murdoch papers.**

**Coorey was right, but not in the way he intended. The budget is dishonest and class-based. It’s class-based because in a capitalist society everything is. Labor thinks if they throw working people a bone, we’ll let the capitalist keep running things. That’s why Labor watered down its reforms to gambling advertising. It’s also why they keep subsidising fossil fuel companies and giving the go-ahead to fossil fuel projects we can’t afford if we want this continent to be habitable.**

**It’s dishonest to pretend that society isn’t run in the interests of a class. The Communist Party of Australia is working for a real democracy in which it’s run by the majority class, the working class.**

# Punching down on the jobless

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Service Stream One will be a new, digital robot-style scheme with algorithms replacing humans, that will have the ability to suspend dole payments and impose financial penalties.

It also includes \$5.9 million for a Future Women scheme to trial a virtual “advisory service specifically for parents, to help them move back into work.” Rushworth does not indicate how much the government expects to save on this inhumane approach.

Stream Two is for those who “are not digitally literate or need more support than the online service can provide.” This could include such things as active job coaching, work-ready supports and training linked to in-demand jobs.

The Third Stream will apply to those people who are “furthest from employed” and require intensive services to (re)enter the labour market. It will include employment such as work experience, volunteer work and employment in social enterprises.

Stream two and three providers will be different and have different systems of remuneration.

The reforms fail to address the principal failings of the present scheme that cause so much distress and condemn hundreds of thousands to poverty – poverty level payments, private operators, and mutual obligations.

Antipoverty Centre spokesman Jay Coonan said keeping mutual obligations denied any meaningful change. “You can’t punish people into employment in an economy designed to keep at least four per cent of us unemployed,” he said.

Unemployment is an intrinsic component of capitalism. The system relies on a reserve labour force to dip into when needed and to suppress wages by instilling fear of replacement by unemployed workers.

“It’s not a major overhaul if you keep ‘mutual’ obligations in place. That’s punishment-as-usual,” Coonan said.

Greens government services spokeswoman Penny Allman-Payne said: “One million people have been waiting for years for Labor to reform John Howard’s employment services system so that it actually helps them find work and doesn’t coerce and punish them.

“But what they’ve discovered ... is that Labor is continuing to prop up a system which punches down on welfare recipients.”

### RAISE THE RATE

The current fortnightly JobSeeker rate is \$404.35 weekly for singles, a punitive payment condemning the unemployed to poverty or dependency on others.

ACOSS has been calling for the scrapping of mutual obligations altogether and for the rates of Jobseeker, Youth Allowance and other payments to be increased to lift recipients above the poverty line.

ACOSS’s Edwina MacDonald said the rates “... are so low, they create an additional barrier to people getting into paid work. People are focussed on struggling to survive, to keep a roof over their head and eat three meals a day, let alone buy a new outfit or get a haircut for a job interview.”

“The social security system should provide to those eligible a guaranteed liveable income which is not subject to participation or other conditions. This payment should be benchmarked to ensure it is adequate to meet essential living costs.”

Allman-Payne, said these reforms will do nothing for those who are out of work.

“If the government was serious about reforms, it would have listened to its own inquiry that it had in 2023 that told them that we need to bring employment services back into public hands, we need to have an independent watchdog overseeing it, and we need to stop pumping money into for-profit providers who are simply making money off harming vulnerable people. If this government is not prepared to bring job services back into public hands and to abolish the punitive coercive mutual obligations framework, then frankly, these reforms aren’t worth the paper that they’re written on.”

Senate estimates in 2025 heard that the government knew the automated target compliance framework was causing harm and that questions remain over its legality, while an ombudsman’s report found that private employment services were making large-scale mistakes in recommending people be eligible for harsh financial penalties.

Jay Coonan said: “What we need to see is to re-nationalise these services. Of course, there were issues with the [original] Commonwealth Employment Service, but what is happening now is we’re essentially seeing billions of dollars in money going overseas through hedge funds and investment firms that these providers are attached to, so what we’re seeing is money being taken from people or money that should be spent on helping people and it’s being sent away or going to these companies’ profits.

“A far better way to do it would be for the government to run these services, to make sure that those finances were being used appropriately and accordingly to help people when they need it.” ✖

## Quote of the Week

**“It’s absolutely legitimate to ask questions about how this government is going about delivering Aukus, about the details of Aukus,”**

Shadow defence minister James Patterson, admitting that Labor dissenter Ed Husic has a point to query the AUKUS program now that the US has announced there will be no new subs. Too bad it wasn’t absolutely legitimate when James’ party was in government.

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## CPA condemns the attacks on the CPI (Marxist)

**The Communist Party of Australia, condemns in the strongest possible terms the latest act of aggression by the BJP-led government against the Communist Party of India (Marxist). This is a grave affront to the movement of working people in India.**

The raids of the residence of former Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, and the detainment of high-profile members of the Party in the subsequent protests,

including General Secretary M A Baby, senior leader Brinda Karat and others, are clearly designed to sow fear in the workers' movement as a whole, and particularly in Kerala, whose development model has seen success over decades.

The latest capitalist offensive will be stopped by the mass movement of Indian workers and peasants and the heroic Communists of India, who will only further unite against these politically orchestrated witch-hunts.

To the capitalist BJP-led government we say: end this abuse of the democratic rights of the CPI(M) leadership and end the violence against CPI(M) protesters.

All power to the workers!

Long live proletarian internationalism!

**International Department  
Central Committee  
Communist Party of Australia**

2 June 2026

## AUKUS inquiry announced

FK

**Former environment minister Peter Garrett has announced he'll lead an independent inquiry into the so-called 'defence pact' known as AUKUS. The inquiry has been launched by Labor figures and others. Their motivation is that the 'pact' which involves Australia spending a minimum of \$368bn to acquire nuclear-powered submarines from the US and the UK is light on scrutiny. The inquiry will be convened under the auspices of the Australian Peace and Security Forum.**

We welcome more attention to AUKUS. It has indeed been secretive, as well as being expensive. So far, it's cost Australia billions handed over to help the US and the UK accelerate sub-building programs. Now we're told that Australia will only get second-hand subs (see 'Peace Notes' page 7). There's been no news on whether or not we get the money we sent to encourage production of new subs back. It has already been made clear that Australia will not be refunded if the submarines don't materialise.

The wider question is if we need the submarines at all. The Communist Party of Australia has always argued that we do not. The AUKUS subs, if they ever materialise, are made to be long range, not for the defence of this continent. Their role would be to be part of a US attempt to threaten China, our major trading partner.

The independent inquiry will look at how nuclear waste would be managed. Richard Marles promised to identify a plan to find a waste site "within 12 months" in 2023! So far no site, no plan for finding one.

The inquiry will also look into the question of whether or not the deal serves Australia's defence and strategic interests. The CPA, and many peace activists in this country have consistently argued that it does not serve our interests. We look forward to the inquiry drawing more attention to the ways in which AUKUS only serves the US, while making Australia poorer and less secure. ✳



International Peace Day at Pioneer Park in Walyalup/Fremantle WA, 2025.

## University class size explosion hurting students, staff

**A class size crisis in Australian universities is smashing the student experience and pushing staff to the brink, according to a landmark survey of more than 4,000 university staff.**

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) report, 'Overloaded: Australia's University Class Size Crisis,' is one of the most comprehensive studies of university teaching conditions ever conducted in Australia. It found that tutorial and lab sizes have increased since 2019. The proportion of tutorials with 30 or more students has more than doubled.

Unsurprisingly, university staff are

reporting that their ability to support students has been compromised.

NTEU National President Dr Alison Barnes said the findings confirmed what staff had been warning for years.

"The class size explosion is being felt at campuses nationwide," Barnes said. "The real-life consequences are unmanageable workloads with students ultimately paying the price."

"This report blows the lid off a crisis that university management and the federal government have been ignoring for too long."

"An overwhelming majority of staff say their ability to support students individually

has been compromised. Students aren't getting the attention they need and their education suffers. This could have a dangerous ripple effect that we feel for generations."

The report found most Australian university tutorials are now two to three times larger than what academics delivering them say is optimal.

More than half of all teaching staff say the ideal tutorial has 10 to 19 students. Just 9% of tutorials today meet that standard.

"University staff know what good teaching looks like," Barnes said.

"They are being systematically prevented from delivering it. We are asking dedicated

academics and tutors to teach classes twice and three times the size they know works, so it's no surprise students feel unsupported and outcomes decline."

There has also been a surge in unrecognised work, with women being worse affected than men. Women are bearing a disproportionate share, with 65% reporting significant increases compared to 53% of men.

"Casual academics are marking essays at midnight, answering emails on weekends, supporting struggling students in their own time," Barnes said.

National Tertiary Education Union ✳

# Union win on sexual harassment

Recently the Australian Services Union (ASU) secured a strong outcome in a sexual harassment matter for a member working in the energy sector.

The member being represented was subjected to repeated sexually inappropriate comments and jokes made by a senior manager, both directly to her and in front of her in the workplace. When she raised concerns about the behaviour, her complaint was dismissed. She was told the conduct did not amount to sexual harassment and that she

may have “misinterpreted” the comments.

The impact on her was significant. Following both the conduct itself and the way her complaint was handled, she no longer felt safe at work – particularly as she was expected to continue working alongside the senior manager involved. She ultimately took stress leave and lodged a WorkCover claim. The claim was initially rejected, but with ASU support the matter proceeded to conciliation and was eventually accepted.

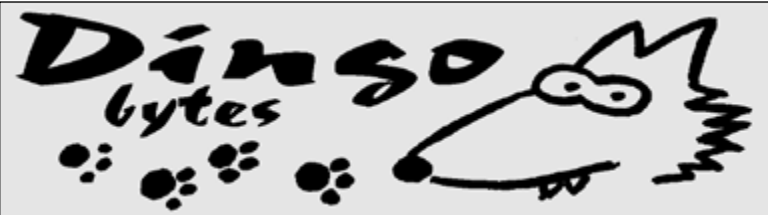
The ASU also lodged an

application in Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010, seeking compensation for the harm and loss caused. Recently, the ASU successfully negotiated a settlement, avoiding the need for our member to go through a hearing process. The outcome included substantial general damages for the hurt, humiliation and injury caused by the conduct. Importantly, it also delivered meaningful workplace change, including significant reforms to workplace policies, reporting systems, and broader organisational approaches to preventing and responding to sexual harassment.

It’s a win for the union. It’s also a win for the member who should never have had to go through the whole proceedings. It’s also a win for other members in the same sector, with management more likely to respect the union’s determination in this areas.

Australian Services Union 

when she raised concerns, her complaint was dismissed



Early childhood educators across the nation will walk off the job in mid-July after the Albanese government failed to provide ongoing funding for their 15 per cent pay rise. Early educators endorsed a walk-off which is likely to force the closure of centres across Australia.

As an indication of widespread support, more than 1,000 centres representing over 20,000 educators signed an open letter urging the government to use the Budget to lock in the pay rise permanently.

But without a clear funding commitment in the Budget, almost all educators face a ‘pay cliff’ of between 4 per cent and 15 per cent in pay cuts when the existing 15 per cent pay rise expires in December.

In addition, parents no longer face the certainty of a cap on early childhood education and care fees, which was a condition of centres signing on to the pay rise.

The pay rise, delivered in 2024 in recognition of the longstanding undervaluation of early childhood education and care work, has already made a measurable difference improving retention, reducing vacancies, and bringing greater stability to the sector.

United Workers Union Early Education Director Carolyn Smith said the government’s failure to act was a serious blow to families and educators already stretched by the rising cost of living.

“This pay rise has made a real difference for the families and children who depend on quality early childhood education, by retaining the passionate, dedicated staff who want to stay in the sector,” she said.

“We cannot go backwards. Educators fought hard for this and the government had every opportunity in the Budget to finish the job.”

PARASITE OF THE WEEK: is Bendigo Bank. Technology workers at Bendigo Bank are staring down the barrel of having some of their most basic rights and working conditions stripped away, under oppressive employment contracts being proposed by Indian tech giant Infosys.

Bendigo Bank announced last month that hundreds of Australian workers will be booted across to Infosys as part of its so-called “productivity program.”

The Finance Sector Union (FSU) said under the proposed contracts, Infosys would be able to force employees to work wherever and whatever hours Infosys deem reasonable. The contracts also allow workers’ pay to go backwards in the event of a pandemic, recession, “calamity,” or change in market conditions, while not offering any guaranteed wage increases or reviews.

Infosys would also be able to demand workers provide their sensitive medical information when they are ill, and could terminate a worker’s employment on medical grounds.

The union said such a violation of rights would set a dangerously low standard that borders on worker exploitation.

The FSU reports Bendigo Bank workers are fearful the worst is yet to come, with more job cuts anticipated from Bendigo Bank’s new partnership with Infosys and Genpact.

The FSU is advising members not to sign their contracts, while calling on Bendigo Bank customers to contact CEO Richard Fennell to express their concerns about the bank’s partnership with Infosys and to save his own workers from these disastrous contracts: <https://fsu.org.au/Bendigo-risking-our-money>.

FSU National Assistant Secretary Nicole McPherson warned: “Imagine turning up to work one day at the same office and performing the same tasks as you’ve previously done, but you’re suddenly employed by an offshore company on vastly inferior conditions. That’s what these Bendigo Bank workers are being told to accept.

“Bendigo Bank may pride itself as being Australia’s most trusted bank, but when it comes to its employees, who are expected to accept inferior conditions to boost the bank’s profits, nothing could be further from the truth.

“If Bendigo Bank is allowed to get away with shafting its technology workers to a company that isn’t prepared to provide their workers with basic rights and conditions, it will open the door for any company to follow in Bendigo Bank’s footsteps.



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# Boorloo protests the IODS



**On 26 May, 14 WA community and political groups joined forces to protest the Indian Ocean Defence & Security Conference - Exhibition (IODS) at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre (PCEC).**

The conference and exhibition were hosted by the WA government and Defence West. It is devastating for many people in the state that it was revealed last week that the Cook Labor government will spend \$11.4 million of taxpayers' money on security alone for Land Forces in October. We don't yet know how much the IODS is costing West Australians. The publicity now cites 240+ exhibitors and 4,800 visitors.

The PCEC was declared a security area under Section 69 of the Criminal Investigation Act. The protest took place in a barricaded area off the Summer Gardens.

The IODS is viewed as the Indian Ocean regional biannual spruik of militarism and the latest weapons of war and destruction, China fear-mongering, a trade fair for the latest weapons of war, all to delude us that the US is our saviour.

The conference comes ahead of the imminent arrival of more than 1,200 US and UK navy personnel and their families in the Rockingham area from 2027.

Rather than prioritise social needs of housing, health, NDIS, and education, and combatting climate change and the threat of nuclear war as our greatest security threats, our taxpayer dollars continue to be poured into militarisation. AUKUS, at an estimated \$368 billion, further embeds us into the US war machine.

Defence has just named global US weapons corporation, Lockheed Martin as the

partner for the weapons system integration of Australia's new AUKUS submarines while another US weapons monster, Raytheon has the contract for the SeaRAM for Australia's Mogami frigates. Also on the cards is a squadron of US B-21 Raid bombers to the tune of AU\$25-30 billion.

Furthermore, Australia's Future Fund has dramatically increased our taxpayer investment in genocide-enabling companies Palantir, Lockheed Martin and Elbit; many of our super funds have a strong investment portfolio in weapons companies.

Greens WA MLC Sophie McNeill addressed the event. She says it's "outrageous" that the Cook Labor government has signed up our beautiful little part of the world to be a cog in the US war machine. McNeill called it "deeply shameful" that WA Labor is cosying up to the US military.

Event MC Sam Wainwright, a founding member of both Stop AUKUS WA and WA Anti-War Collective says "The push by the state and federal governments to make Australia a major weapons exporter is making the world a more dangerous place. It ties Australia into a weapons production chain with the Trump regime, which has openly declared its intention to disregard international law, as well as prop up serial human rights abusers such as Israel and the UAE. Security for the Australian people is best secured through a foreign policy based on peace and justice in the world, not allying with dictators and war criminals."

Student Josh Last said "Australia shamelessly invests in the perpetuation of the killing machine mentality; brain washing primary and high school students with glittering, mind boggling weapons and



Senator Jordon Steele-John addresses the demonstration

war machines and pushing a career in our troubled defence forces – we'll no doubt see them lining up at the IODS Career Day on the 28th May."

UWA and Curtin university are exhibitors – proudly promoting the infiltration of defence and weapons companies on campus.

The role of critical minerals in Defence and the consequent exploitation of our First Nations mining land is also on the IODS agenda.

Unionist, National President of the

Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and founding member of the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society, ACFS in WA, Vinnie Molina spoke about peace as union business, Australia's paranoia about China and our US AUKUS and Alliance partners' ongoing blockade of Cuba and current alarming threat to topple yet another sovereign state.

Not in our Name! Protect our Planet and People – not the pockets of merchants of death! No AUKUS! No War!

Stop AUKUS WA ✖

## Australian unions welcome 4.75% wage increase

**Australian Unions have welcomed the Fair Work Commission's decision to award a wage rise of 4.75 per cent for Australian workers who rely on minimum and award wages.**

With headline inflation currently at 4.2 per cent, the Annual Wage Review decision broadly keeps up with the cost-of-living and will provide some financial relief for 3 million working Australians.

The uplift in pay for minimum wage and award-reliant workers will help working Australians deal with the very worst of the inflation effects caused by what the Fair Work Commission termed the "wild card of the Middle East conflict."

Unions have also welcomed the Fair Work Commission's decision to increase the wages of around 100,000 of the workers on the lowest modern award rates by 6% – matching the ACTU's claim. This lifts the lowest rate of pay for ongoing work from \$24.95 per hour to \$26.44, or a \$56 a week increase for a full-time worker to \$1,004 from 1 July.

A retail worker paid at level 2 of the retail award will receive a weekly wage increase of \$49.78 or an annual pay boost of \$2,588.70 if working on a full-time basis.

The pay boost will flow-through to workers immediately impacted from 1 July and benefits all working Australians by lifting the national

minimum wage floor that unions bargain from.

Lower-paid workers are concentrated in retail, accommodation and food services, community, care, arts, administration, recreation and the health care sectors. They are predominantly women, and on part-time or casual work arrangements.

Unions pursued a 6% minimum wage increase after the Federal Budget forecast that inflation would reach 5% by the middle of the year.

The annual wage review decision falls short of that except for the very lowest paid, it will ease some of the worst price pressures caused by the war's aftershocks,

with a small buffer if the global situation drags on.

ACTU Secretary Sally McManus said, "Australian Unions work hard to secure wage increases, and we welcome the Fair Work Commission's decision to lift wages for around 3 million lower-paid workers by 4.75 per cent come 1 July.

"It means relief is on the way for lower paid workers to help keep up with price pressures and avoid the need to cut back on essentials like food or seeing a doctor.

McManus called the decision a "positive real wage increase" and agreed that the increase would add a buffer against the worst impacts of the Trump war "providing it doesn't drag on throughout the year."

"It is encouraging to see that even higher wage rises of 6%, matching our full claim, have been awarded to around 100,000 workers on the very lowest pay rates because they simply could not afford to wait."

Communist Party of Australia National President Vinnie Molina said, "We welcome the decision and believe the ACTU original claim of 6% despite being below inflation rate would still leave workers out of pocket. Around 4 million lower paid workers will receive an increase. Many of whom work a couple of jobs to make ends meet. Workers need a living wage." ✖

# Indigenous cases 98 per cent of diphtheria outbreak

Giovanni Torre

**The diphtheria outbreak in the Northern Territory which has overwhelmingly impacted Aboriginal communities has caused at least one death, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress reports.**

Diphtheria is a vaccine-preventable disease and last caused a death in Australia almost ten years ago.

The Territory's Health Department declared an outbreak of the disease in March, the first diphtheria outbreak in Australia for about three decades.

Australian Centre for Disease Control data indicates the vast majority of locally acquired cases are residents in "outer regional," remote or very remote areas and more than 98 per cent of cases are Indigenous.

The strain of respiratory diphtheria can be deadly if left untreated. Congress' chief medical officer of public health, Dr John Boffa, says federal resources are needed now to deliver vaccinations and booster shots to stem the spread of the disease.

Dr Boffa told the ABC the death occurred a number of weeks ago in a remote area.

The Centre for Disease Control

told the national broadcaster it was "aware of media reports of a fatal case of diphtheria in the Northern Territory."

"Investigations into the death are still underway by the NT government," the Centre said.

Dr Boffa told the ABC the disease was spreading across the Territory, with current case numbers of respiratory diphtheria and cutaneous diphtheria surpassing 100 and a number of people being admitted to intensive care.

He said the majority of the people becoming "seriously sick" after contracting diphtheria were either unvaccinated or had not received a booster in the recommended time frame.

The death in 2018, the last recorded before this outbreak, involved an unvaccinated adult.

Cases have been recorded in Western Australia, Queensland, and South Australia, with a total of 161 testing positive for diphtheria nationwide.

While there is a high vaccine coverage rate among children, Dr Boffa said teenagers and adults needed to receive booster shots.

"Some late adolescents are getting sick because they haven't had a dose since they were children and they have missed their dose at 12 years old," he told the ABC.

"And adults need a booster now if it's been more than five years."

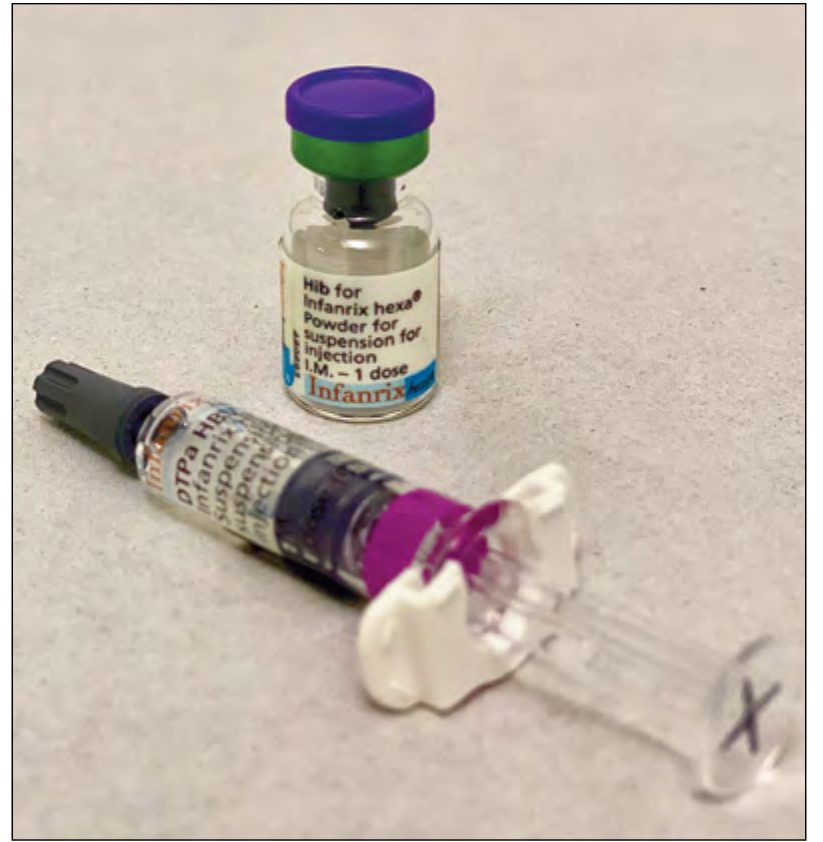
Dr Boffa said federal resources were "on the way" to assist with delivering vaccinations and boosters, particularly to vulnerable populations, with "a very significant additional contribution" from the Commonwealth expected over the next six months.

Dr Boffa said the outbreak was placing added pressure on clinics "which are struggling anyway to deliver routine primary healthcare".

"We don't want to have to divert essential primary healthcare resources into this, but right now we have to because we don't have a surge workforce or additional resources," he said.

A spokesperson from the federal Department of Health, Disability and Ageing told the ABC the federal government has been working with the NT government, the Australian Health Protection Committee, and the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector on "a range of measures to support the response to Diphtheria in the NT".

*National Indigenous Times* ✪



The hexavalent vaccine protects against hepatitis B, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis and Haemophilus influenzae type b.  
Photo: Whispyhistory – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

## NT urged not to weaken Child Placement Principle

**Australia's First Peoples and Children's Commissioners are calling on the Northern Territory government to scrap plans to weaken the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle through proposed amendments to child protection laws.**

Following the death of Kumanjaji Little Baby in Alice Springs last month, the government has commenced a review into the territory's child protection system and introduced new child protection legislation into parliament. Many First Peoples advocates fear the proposed changes have the potential to dilute how the Child Placement Principle operates in the territory.

The Child Placement Principle is a framework that protects the safety, wellbeing, identity and cultural rights of First Peoples' children by ensuring culture, family, community and Country are central to decisions

affecting the welfare of First Peoples children in protection.

The Commissioners have warned any changes that make it easier to separate First Peoples children from family, community and culture risks undermining children's rights, repeating past harms and moving further away from evidence-based reform.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Katie Kiss says the government "is making a serious mistake if it believes weakening the Child Placement Principle will keep our children safe."

"The principle exists because generations of our children have already paid the price of being removed from family, culture and community. Weakening that safeguard is a backward step that risks entrenching harm, deepening distrust and repeating the very injustices governments say they want to end.

"The tragedy of Kumanjaji Little Baby's

death should not be compounded by diminishing the rights of First Peoples children and families across the Northern Territory, and these proposals are a clear breach of our rights under a range of United Nations agreements, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. If the Northern Territory government is serious about child safety, it should invest in First Peoples-led solutions, family support and culturally safe care."

National Children's Commissioner Deb Tsorbaris says, "We cannot protect First Peoples children by stripping away the very safeguards designed to protect their identity, stability and sense of belonging."

"These proposals have been rightly met with fierce opposition from leading advocates for First Peoples children across the country. We support their calls for the Northern Territory government to halt the progression

of these new laws and instead commit to evidence-based reform that upholds children's rights, strengthens families and supports communities to keep children safe."

The Commissioners also support calls for the recently announced review of the territory's child protection system to be led by the Northern Territory Children's Commissioner with support from other experts, including the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children.

Commissioner Kiss says that what's needed is for "people with deep knowledge and experience of these matters to be leading the review." She added that the inquiry must also have the necessary independence, resourcing and parameters to ensure the needs and expectations of Indigenous communities in the territory are put first."

*Australian Human Rights Commission* ✪

## Gina Rinehart's Hancock sues Canada over blocked coal project

**Australian billionaire Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting is suing Canada over a rejected coal mine, in the third investor-state dispute under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) since it came into force in 2018.**

The case centres on the proposed Grassy Mountain project in Alberta, which was blocked in 2021 after a joint federal-provincial review found it would likely cause

significant environmental harm, including damage to waterways and a threatened fish species. The project was backed by Riversdale Resources, owned by Hancock Prospecting.

Now, the companies are seeking more than \$2 billion in compensation, arguing that Canada's decision unfairly undermined their investment. After not getting their way in Canadian courts, they have launched an international arbitration claim using investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS), a

mechanism available under the CPTPP.

ISDS provisions, embedded in thousands of trade and investment agreements, allow foreign investors to bypass national courts and sue governments for billions of dollars if they can claim that a change in law or policy will harm their future profits and they were not consulted fairly about the change. This case is one of a growing number of cases by fossil fuel companies against government regulation of the environment and carbon emissions.

The case comes as Australia has been stepping back from ISDS provisions in trade agreements, with the current Labor government having a policy to exclude ISDS in new agreements and to remove ISDS in existing agreements. While Australia has side letters in the CPTPP with countries such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom exempting them from the ISDS provisions, no exemption exists between Australia and Canada, allowing this claim to proceed.

Whether or not Hancock

Prospecting ISDS claim is successful the broader implications are significant. Even unsuccessful claims can create pressure on policymakers, showing how ISDS in trade agreements like the CPTPP is a barrier to regulating environmental risks and to the transition away from fossil fuels.

*Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network* ✪

# Australia making explosives for Israel

Peter Farmer

According to a recent report in *The Shot*, despite months of reassurances from Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Australia has been manufacturing the explosive that goes in bombs, missiles, bullets, and shells used by the Israeli Defence Force in its attacks on Palestinians and Lebanese.

Factories in Benalla in Victoria and in Mulwala in NSW have been making the explosives RDX (or cyclonite), nitrocellulose, and nitroglycerin. These explosives are used in all manner of munitions.

Under a Liberal government the French arms giant Thales signed a deal to operate the two factories for \$1.1 billion. The companies are run through Australian Munitions, a smaller company owned by Thales.

*The Shot* reports that the munitions plant in Mulwala is staffed by around 400 people and that this is about a 10 per cent increase in staff since Israel increased attacks on Gaza in 2023. Munitions go from the plant to ports to be shipped to Singapore, where arms dealers working on behalf of the Israeli government buy them. Other munitions are shipped to the US and are shipped on to Israel from there.

About those denials from Penny Wong, Richard Marles, and Anthony Albanese: *The Shot* points out that the three commonly put the word 'directly' into denials that Australia is not arming the IDF, as in "We do not sell weapons or ammunition directly to Israel." They do this because Australia sells Israel explosives indirectly. ✚



## PEACE NOTES

Denis Doherty

### Second Hand Submarines for AUKUS

Australia is to accept three second hand nuclear submarines because the US says it can't spare any new ones. You could see it as a slap in the face after years of servile service from this country, or you could recognise that the AUKUS subs were never meant to be appropriate for Australia's needs.

The ALP government has doubled down on this crazy Scott Morrison project. Second-hand nuclear submarines mean tired nuclear reactors, and degraded vessels of questionable seaworthiness but Defence Minister Richard Marles was entirely positive. He said that the subs we were to acquire were all the same type and this would simplify maintenance and training of sailors to use the equipment.

Marles finished his press conference with some top-draw spin: "Chasing simplicity is at the heart of why we've pursued this." Maybe the Defence Department has learned the lessons of the US/Israel vs Iran war, where relatively cheap weapons can inflict massive damage on multimillion- and billion-dollar weapons. Marles hasn't.

### Hegseth at Shangri La

Peter Hegseth, the US Secretary of Defence gave an address on 30 May at the 2026 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore. The address was filled with the usual belligerence.

Hegseth lectured the assembled 'allies.' They needed to spend 3.5% of GDP on their militaries. "We need more combat power ... less Shangri-La, more ships, more subs."

Of course, he made a threat about China "we insist that China respect our longstanding position in the region and not just insist but maintain the manifest military strength to underwrite it."

Hegseth continued with the Trump theme that the US has been subsidising ungrateful freeloaders formerly known as subservient 'allies.' Hegseth seemed completely unaware of the freeloading the US has been doing since the end of WW2 on countries around the region.

Australia has allowed the US to have around 50 bases in Australia for no cost, has allowed the US to stage through our ports and airfields and use our land for exercises at little or no cost. Australia has lost tons of treasure and personnel by participating in US wars and this former Fox News blowhard is accusing us of "freeloading." It's high time we ditched our alliance with this demanding and ignorant superpower.

### Richard Marles: brown nosing, appeals to law

Richard Marles the Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister also spoke. Marles was a contrast to Hegseth. Marles emphasised the 'rules-based order' which the 'secretary of war' has clearly said is dead as a dodo.

It has long been recognised that the rules-based order was invented by the US as a tool to manipulate its population into believing its 'forever wars' were somehow legitimate. Marles continues the long tradition of Australian governments of abjectly supporting the US no matter what they do. "But we are much better off with it [rules based order] than without it, and it has been to our region's great benefit that the United States has chosen to invest in that order based on an enlightened conception of its own self-interest." This juvenile fawning admiration of the US is truly embarrassing to all Australians.

Marles seems to be obsessed with recent events in Northern Europe where cables on the seabed were allegedly deliberately torn up by Russia which led to interruption to the internet and communications. He didn't mention the US tearing up the Nord Stream pipeline in the same area. Australia has 15 such cables which are vulnerable to attack and would cause Australia to be isolated should that happen.

In response to these problems Marles said: "More than forty per cent of our defence budget under the 2026 NDS [National Defence Strategy] is now directed to maritime capabilities. We are engaging in a generational recapitalisation of the Royal Australian Navy." That's Marles-speak for "we're spending a lot of your money on something that won't help" (and may not exist).



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# Che Guevara at 98

Graham Holton

**Ernesto 'Che' Guevara was born on 14 May 1928 in Rosario, Argentina and died on 9 October 1967 in La Higuera, Bolivia. His nickname 'Che' came from his use of the Argentine interjection 'che,' meaning 'mate.' Che was a guerilla leader, a theoretician, and a tactician of guerrilla warfare. After his execution by the Bolivian army (under the orders of the CIA), he became a martyred hero. For generations his image remains an icon of global anti-imperialism.**

Che was a central figure in the Cuban Revolution, a committed anti-imperialist, a revolutionary idealist and a symbol of resistance to inequality and foreign domination. He became an influential revolutionary symbol, inspiring Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua. His speeches at the United Nations criticised imperialism, racism, and economic inequality. The famous photograph of Che, *Guerrillero Heroico* by Alberto Korda, has become one of the most reproduced images in history. Guevara remains a symbol of rebellion, revolution, and anti-imperialism. His image has been used by student movements, socialist organisations, and protest cultures around the world.

His achievements were many. After a US coup toppled the left-wing government of Arbenz in 1954, Che left Guatemala to join Fidel Castro and the 26th of July Movement in Mexico. Eighty-two men in the yacht *Granma* landed in the Cuban province of Oriente in December 1956, with Che helping lead guerrilla campaigns against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. His military

leadership during the Battle of Santa Clara in 1958 was decisive in the collapse of the government. Castro's victorious troops entered Havana on 8 January 1959, establishing a socialist government.

After the Cuban Revolution, Che defined Cuba's policies. In 1965 he wrote 'Man and Socialism in Cuba,' showing how socialist citizens in Cuba worked for the good of society rather than for personal profit. His *Guerrilla Warfare* became a highly influential manual. Guevara held major government positions as president of the National Bank of Cuba, Minister of Industries and instructional director for Cuba's armed forces. He wanted to industrialise the agricultural-based economy starting with agrarian land reforms to break up the large estates. Che believed Cuba had to industrialise if it wanted to reduce its dependence on sugar exports and foreign corporations. He helped lift up the people from poverty with literacy, education, and universal healthcare.

Guevara advocated armed revolutionary movements against colonialism and Western domination in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. In 1965 he had travelled to the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) with other Cuban guerrilla fighters to help the Patrice Lumumba Battalion fight in the civil war. In 1966 Guevara travelled to Bolivia to create and lead a guerrilla group in the region of Santa Cruz. He was captured, killed, and buried in a mass grave near the town of Vallegrande.

Che Guevara is celebrated on 8 October, the "Day of the Heroic Guerrilla," commemorating the anniversary of his death in a day dedicated to honouring his political, ethical, and revolutionary legacy. He is remembered as a model revolutionary, a symbol of sacrifice and internationalism, and for his principles of socialism. ✪



## Op-Ed: US fascist surveillance is escalating

HF

**The United States Empire is trying to cling desperately to its power. Aside from the failing military domination and crumbling psychological operations, there is also a severe escalation in surveillance against working people.**

Big tech continues to create profiles of all its users with frightening levels of detail, and masked ICE agents in the US have been given new AI-powered data collection tools to detain and deport people. Surveillance and fascism are directly connected, and here's how.

The bourgeois state spies on people because it is politically and economically motivated to do so. This goes back to the Palmer raids of 1919-1920, otherwise known as

the First Red Scare. Threatened by the Bolshevik Revolution and increased labour unrest domestically, the United States government monitored, detained, and deported thousands of suspected communists, with an emphasis on Eastern Europeans and Italians.

Fast forward to the end of World War II, the United States had emerged as the greatest imperial power in the world, but had also declared the Soviet Union an enemy. Because the Soviet Union under Stalin had defeated the fascists, people began to view communism favourably. This was politically inconvenient for the servants of capital, so they had to discredit communism through whatever means necessary. This involved economic concessions to the working class, overt mass media

campaigns against communism, covert intellectual anticommunism, and extensive surveillance and infiltration of communist groups. Surveillance once again became a tool of imperialist power so that they could divide and conquer their internal enemies and do imperialism without consequence.

In the early 21st century, the Soviet Union no longer existed, and the excuse of anticommunism became less legitimate. This changed after 9/11, which empowered American racism and imperial fervour, and created the Homeland Security Act and the Patriot Act. The former created the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.

ICE drastically extended state surveillance powers. As with the Palmer raids, this bourgeois

reaction was used to justify deportations of racialised others in America, and with increased technological development, there were resources to extend surveillance to the majority of the American working class.

Now, the political climate has changed, and the conditions of the working class in the US have deteriorated. The American Dream is dead, and people are slowly starting to turn towards socialism. In other words, the capitalist class is starting to feel threatened, and is trying to control its citizens more violently.

Now, the excuse for surveillance has changed to be about children's safety on the internet. Big tech companies have created elaborate systems of data collection through social media and tech monopolies, with capitalist incentives to collect

the data of everyone, including children. The increasingly fascist state also finds that data useful, and tech companies have started asking for identification at the level of social media accounts and even device operating systems.

The anonymity that was taken for granted on the internet is being destroyed. Given the impunity that the wealthy and powerful enjoy, the child safety justification doesn't make sense for a second.

The internet is new. Social media is even newer, but there is a consistent pattern across a hundred years of history. A consistent historical trend emerges: surveillance, reaction, and racist deportations increase as the rule of capital feels threatened. ✪



**Something to say?  
Write to the Editor!**

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

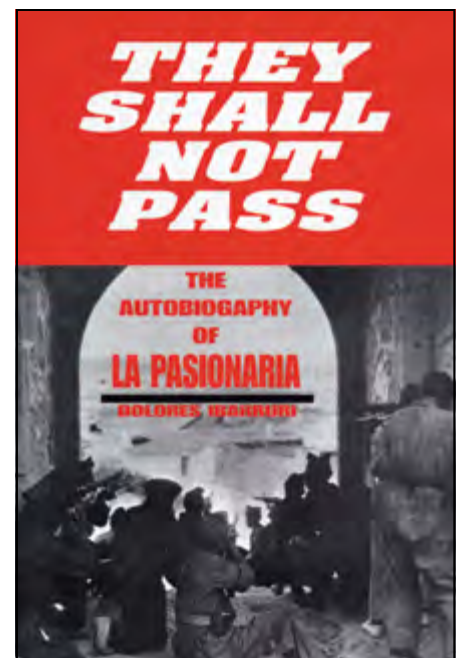
## Revolutionary Women

GH

**Isidora Dolores Ibárruri Gómez, known as Pasionaria ('Passion flower'), was a Spanish Republican communist politician during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). She is renowned for her slogan ¡No Pasarán! ('They shall not pass!'), which she issued during the Battle for Madrid in November 1936.**

That year she was elected to the Cortes Generales as a PCE (Partido Comunista de España, Communist Party of Spain) deputy for Asturias. After going into exile in 1939 she later became General Secretary of the Central Committee of the PCE from 1942 to 1960.

Dolores Ibárruri published *They Shall Not Pass: The Autobiography of La Pasionaria* in 1962, telling of her support for Communist issues and politics during the brutal struggle during the Civil War. In 1961 Ibárruri was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Historical Sciences by Moscow State University for her contributions to the development of Marxist theory. In her acceptance speech, she asserted that class struggle is the motor of history. Ibárruri contributed greatly to the Communist Party of Spain. She died in 1989. ✪



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## Book Review:

# Rich Kid Poor Kid

## Jane Caro

Reviewer: M Santos

**Jane Caro is a well-known activist and advocate for a well-resourced public education system. She has written extensively on the topic and appeared on TV shows such as the ABC's Q and A. In *Rich Kid Poor Kid: The battle for public education*, an essay published by Australia Institute Press, Caro argues a strong case for universal, needs-based public education system.**

Australia has some of the most expensive schools in the world in what Caro describes as a class-based system. She poses the question: "What did we change that so undermined these local schools or, at least, our trust in the quality of them? When did so many Australians start to believe that good schools were private and public schools were crap?"

She answers these questions going back to the time when the conservative Menzies Liberal-Country Party Coalition government began giving capital and later recurrent grants to private, fee-charging schools.

Later on, Gough Whitlam wooed the Catholic vote with increased funding to fee-charging private schools including the many not-so-well-off Catholic schools. He did, however, introduce federal funding for state schools, previously solely reliant on state funding.

This trend has continued with both Coalition and Labor governments alike buying off the elite private and Catholic schools with ever-increasing handouts at the expense of public schools.

State public schools accept all students regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, disabilities, religious beliefs, and ability to pay. 'Public' means everyone. But an ideological and political campaign

by governments and the corporate media has successfully convinced many parents that private schools are "better."

Caro writes at length on what she refers to as the shift from an emphasis on "the public good towards the private and positional," where "the self-declared 'elite schools' come into their own."

A positional good is something that is good because other people don't have it. Ordinary goods like air conditioning are good no matter who else has them. Luxury cars are an example of a positional good – if everyone had a Porsche, the people who have Porsches now wouldn't want them as much. Private schooling is a positional good. It is subsidised by the people who can't afford it.

Caro refutes John Howard's myth of "choice" which was used as an excuse to increase private school funding, and the public league tables based on NAPLAN that the media love to run, pointing to 'good' and 'bad' schools.

Caro says, "in capitalism, the market will always charge what the market can bear." She advocates strongly against subsidising private schools in favour of well-resourced, secular government schools.

She asks a number of rhetorical questions such as:

"How can you be exclusive unless you have mechanisms such as fees that exclude?"

Does the segregation of schools on the basis of religion, disabled, rich, poor, ability, and so on, help to build a cohesive society or does it do the opposite?

The essay explains how Australia has arrived at two publicly funded education systems: "one with all the rights, and one with all responsibilities."

The class system is successful in its aims in educating an elite to run the country and maintain their

privilege. School "choice" leads to the increasing concentrations of advantaged and disadvantaged kids in advantaged and disadvantaged schools.

"It is literally a case of the poor subsidising the rich ..."

She dispels the myth that private schools get better results. When compared on the basis of socio-economic status, there is no difference, but under-funded public schools spend less.

A breakdown quoted from the Australian Council of Social Service is revealing: Public schools educate two-thirds of all Australian students including 80% of children from families of low socioeconomic advantage and more than 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The final section of the essay offers solutions starting with the Gonski resourcing standards with a call to abolish the charity status of some private schools that enables donations to be tax deductible.

Caro provides a list of eight worthwhile policy points, suggesting: better class sizes, well paid teachers and support specialists, free nutritious meals for students, eyesight testing with provision of free glasses and a number of other health measures. She also advocates a range of physical measures such as well-maintained classrooms and appropriate technology.

Importantly, recommendations extend beyond the school to supporting women and children born into social disadvantage long before the children reach school.

"Public schools are an expression of a public good: the common good. They're hanging by a thread. We jettison them at our peril," Caro concludes.

This essay is Caro at her best – well-researched and convincingly arguing the case for radical change. ✨

## Film Review:

# Power Ballad

## Directed by John Carney

Reviewer: MD

**Three years after his gorgeous musical drama *Flora and Son*, Irish writer-director John Carney returns with a joyous and hilarious comedy, set in Dublin, about a past-his-prime wedding singer and a fading boy band star, both chasing recognition and relevance.**

When Rick Power (Paul Rudd) meets US popstar Danny Wilson (Nick Jonas) at a wedding gig they bond over a jam session. However when Danny takes one of Rick's songs (called 'How to write a song') and turns it into a number one hit, reigniting his failing career in the process, Rick decides to head to Los Angeles to reclaim the song.

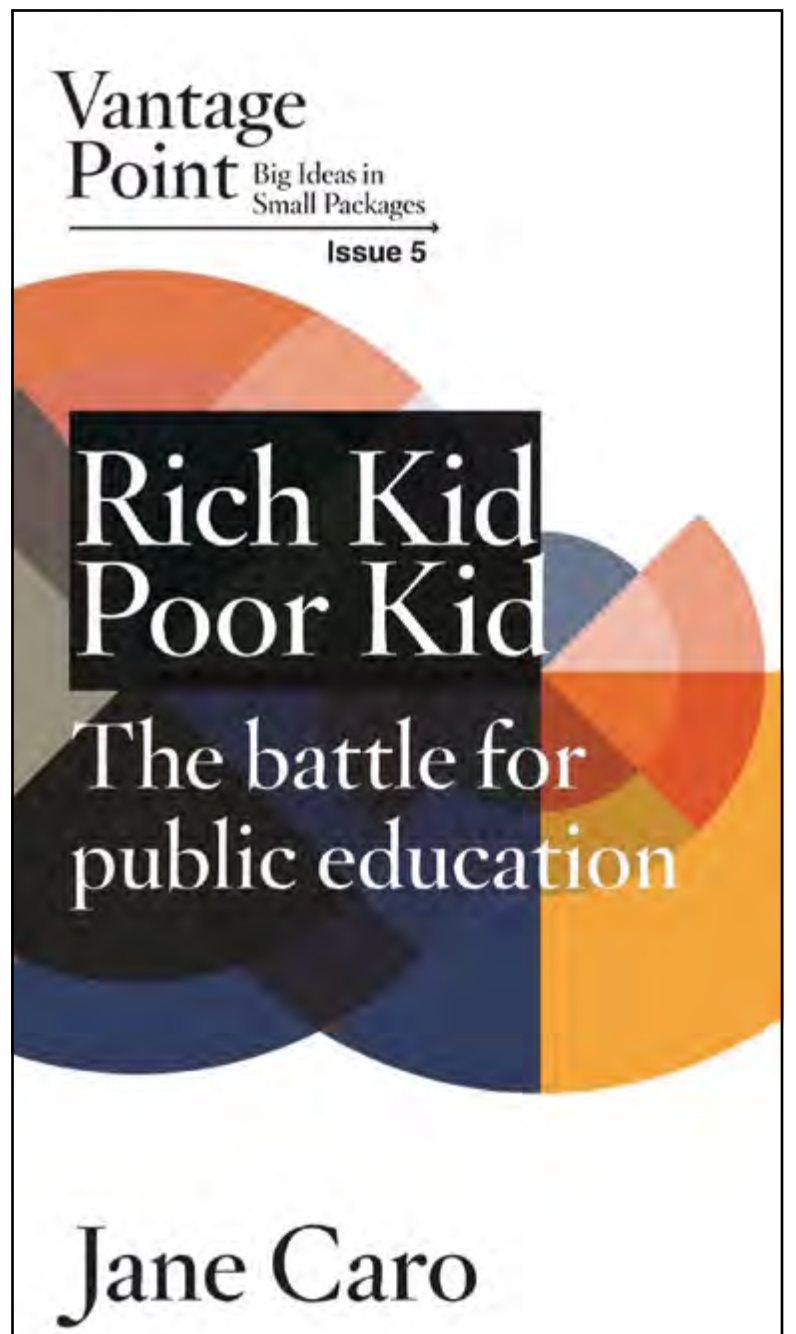
*How to Write a Song* takes on a life of its own and a different meaning for both men as they stake their claim. Rick is frustrated because he knows he wrote it but neither his wife, daughter nor his band believe him. However Sandy (Peter McDonald who co-wrote the script), his madcap band member, decides to accompany him to LA and glorious mayhem ensues.

Rudd, who performs all the songs in the film himself, gives one of his finest performances to date as Rick, who feels he should have had Danny's success and career but instead settled for his family in Ireland.



And singer-turned-actor Jonas is perfect as Danny. Carney, who directed, co-wrote, produced and co-composed the music and the songs, delivers a moving and uplifting crowd-pleaser which will have you singing *How to Write a Song* by the end. This is a must-see.

*Morning Star* ✨



**"It is literally a case of the poor subsidising the rich ..."**

### Solutions to Crossword

Guardian 1 June 2026, #2192

#### Across

- 2 What sort of gearing did Albanese tinker with? **NEGATIVE**
- 3 Falsely blamed for the housing crisis **MIGRANTS**
- 6 Government program being slashed because of costs **NDIS**
- 7 Rectangular dog, made in Australia **BLUEY**
- 10 What kind of people are supposed to be upset about CGT? **YOUNG**
- 11 The US is about to waste money on an Arc de **TRUMP**
- 14 Who gave Australia some much-needed jet fuel? **CHINA**
- 15 Cuba has a lot of this stuff, used in computers **COBALT**

#### Down

- 1 Attitude to climate change we can't afford **DENIAL**
- 4 Government program NOT being slashed despite costs and no result **AUKUS**
- 5 Kind of monk, Liberap Party president **TONYABBOTT**
- 8 Kitsch about Indigenous Australians **ABORIGINALIA**
- 9 Nation whose people want to move here due to climate change **TUVALU**
- 12 Best fix for the housing crisis? **PUBLIC**
- 13 Gaza flotilla activists treated worse than **ANIMALS**
- 16 Historic epic, recently filmed **THEODYSSEY**

# US stalks Cuba

Eugene Doyle

**The Western world is hiding in the corner, averting its gaze as the US moves ever-closer to yet another war of aggression. This time it is against Cuba, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio signalling that a US war on Cuba is almost inevitable.**

The US indictment of 95-year-old former Cuban President Raúl Castro is a classic pre-invasion propaganda manoeuvre. Another recent example is the US charade about fighting for democracy in Iran before killing hundreds of Iranian children on the first day of the war, and thousands of other civilians in the days that followed.

Luis Ernesto Morejón Rodríguez, Cuba's ambassador to New Zealand, told me that "Cuba maintains that this accusation forms part of a broader escalation of political pressure and efforts to criminalise its historic leadership."

It's impossible to tell for sure – but it is hard not to wonder if the US is trying to create a distraction from its disastrous war of aggression against Iran, by launching a war of aggression against Cuba.

The long US strangulation of Cuba started the year I was born – 1959 – and has continued my entire life. The crime Cuba committed – an assertion of sovereignty and refusal of US domination. That determination was on full display recently – on May Day – when over 500,000 people marched in Havana to condemn the US pressure campaign and to celebrate Cuban sovereignty.

Shame on the men and women who stand back and watch this latest American crime. Shame on Canadian PM Mark Carney, for his fine speeches about international law, that are now ringing hollow. Shame on all those Western leaders, who have, for decades, turned a blind eye every time the Americans went abroad and did their evil work.

Marco Rubio says Cuba is a "national security threat" to the US. This would be laughable, if it weren't the prelude to a crime. The reflexively mendacious Rubio said recently that the chances of a diplomatic outcome were slim: "I'm just being honest with you, you know, the likelihood of that happening, given who we're dealing with right now, is not high."

At the UN this year the overwhelming majority of nations, including my own (New Zealand), voted to support the resolution



Protest against the blockade on Cuba, Boorloo/Perth, 2019.

entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba."

The United Nations Charter is the document we should all turn to and respect in moments like these. As Ambassador Rodríguez told me: "Any threat or use of force against Cuba would constitute a direct violation of fundamental principles of international law." He made specific reference to core articles of the Charter, specifically:

- the sovereign equality of State
- non-interference in internal affairs
- the prohibition of the threat or use of force
- respect for the territorial integrity and political independence of State
- the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination.

Nowhere in the Charter does it say that our media should uncritically parrot whatever lies come out of Washington – suggesting Cuba somehow poses a clear and present danger to the country that has its knee on its neck.

Israel, according to global polling, is the most loathed country on the planet. The United States has seen its own standing in the world community of nations fall through the floor. Of the 68 countries surveyed in the Global Country Perceptions 2026 ranking, the US is 64th just four above Israel. Nira Data Global Pulse surveys show that globally people identify the United States as the main threat to humanity.

There is something creepy about the US, something to be shunned, feared and loathed by the global majority. Machiavelli may have said, "It is better to be feared than loved," but he added "if you cannot

be both." Hatred, he warned, can lead to resistance.

The people of the earth are sick of the insanity, the incoherence, the endless cruelty and violence, the brute stupidity of the US empire. Enough, already!

I weep for Palestine, I weep for Iran and for so many other countries that have suffered from American power. I fear for Cuba and the long-suffering Cuban people. I stand with the people of Cuba. I stand for the United Nations Charter and, above all, for respect for the territorial integrity of states.

The UN Charter tells us that the Cuban people, not the US, should determine the social, political and economic systems of their country.

Cuba Libre!

*Pearls and Irritations*  
johnmenadue.com/post/2026/06/  
us-stalks-cuba/ 🇺🇸

## Book Review:

# Ungrounding: The Architecture of Genocide by Eyal Weizman

Reviewer: Jamie Britton

**Eyal Weizman is the founder and director of Forensic Architecture and Professor of Spatial and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University in London. I read his essay on the demolition of Gaza called "All They Will Find Is Sand" in *The London Review of Books* on 23 April 2026. I was so impressed by the content and the clear style. I wanted to read more. This new publication is it.**

Many books have been written about the horrors of the genocide happening in the Gaza Strip, but what makes this book stand out is, as Ilan Pappé states on the back cover, "a timely and crucial contribution tracing the trail of the Israeli architectural, ecological and

infrastructural destruction of the Gaza Strip."

The book is in split into sections, almost like the layers of soil that have been destroyed in Gaza. The introduction, called 'The Earth-Storm,' narrates the ditch carved in the soil in August 1950, dividing what was to become the Gaza Strip from the rest of Palestine. Farms were destroyed. The Colombian UN officer posted to the frontier only "took off his shirt to sunbathe" while Israelis taunted farmers, saying: "Take a photograph of this place because you will not see it again." They pocketed the fruit from their side of the line, consumed them and threw the stones back at the farmers saying "Eat some!"

Part One, 'Soil,' lists in precise detail how the expulsion of the Palestinian people took place from

the Balfour Declaration in 1917 to the leafletting dropped on Gaza on Friday morning, 13 October 2023. Each chapter has a precise map showing what the Palestinians had lost and what others had gained. The chapter also details many of the horrific crimes committed by Israeli soldiers that have recently come to light.

Part Two, 'Subsoil,' discusses how and why tunnels were built and how the constant bombardment by Israel has poisoned the water supply.

Part Three, 'Undergrounding,' describes what happened on 7 October 2023, and the events thereafter.

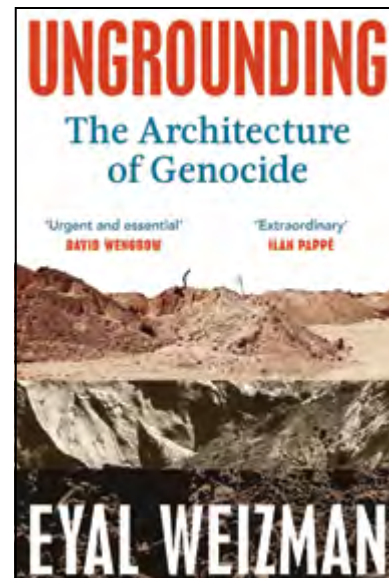
The last section of Part Three is called 'The Genocide's Riviera' and has maps, photographs and detailed content of the story up to now, bringing the reader back to

the start, when the plough blade cut through the soil in the 1950s. As Weizman states "Israel had camouflaged its atrocities with humanitarian rhetoric."

'The Coda' that forms the last part of this book is from when Weizman sent it to his publishers in late 2025. The Israeli military is in control. The bulldozers have removed any trace of Palestinian habitation and (worryingly) Weizman says "The Israeli government hopes that what 'two years of war did not accomplish [namely the destruction of Palestinian resistance and the expulsion of Palestinians] will be done by market forces.'

Boycott Israeli goods. Continue to protest. And buy two copies of this book. One for yourself and one for those that need to be educated.

*Morning Star* 🇺🇸



# Indian Communists protest

**Indian Communists protest at the residence of former Kerala Chief Minister and CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Pinarayi Vijayan at the Enforcement Directorate (ED) headquarters. The protest was led by CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby.**

During the protest, Delhi Police detained the demonstrators. Those detained included senior leader Brinda Karat, Polit Bureau members Ashok Dhawale, Mariam Dhawale and Vijoo Krishnan, Central Committee members Vikram Singh, and Delhi State secretary Anurag Saxena. More than one hundred protesters were also detained.

The raid was supposedly in connection with the CMRL-Exalogic case. Mineral company Cochin Minerals and Rutile Limited (CMRL) is alleged to have had a slush fund and been involved with money laundering connected with former Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his daughter's IT company Exalogic.

Addressing the gathering, MA Baby strongly condemned the action carried out by the ED under the direction of the central government and stated that the raid on Pinarayi Vijayan's residence was a politically motivated act of vendetta. He pointed out that courts have repeatedly observed that Pinarayi Vijayan has absolutely no connection with the Exalogic case, yet the political witch-hunt against him continues unabated.

He further stated that such an action taking place immediately after Chief Minister VD Satheesan's meeting with the Prime Minister in Delhi raises serious questions and appears to be a politically orchestrated drama. Several individuals whose names reportedly appeared in the CMRL diary continue to hold important positions in the state government. However, while ignoring all of them, the continuous targeting of Pinarayi Vijayan further exposes the political vendetta behind these actions.

Baby said that the party has no intention whatsoever of obstructing any investigation process, but that the blatant misuse of central agencies by the central government for political targeting cannot be accepted. The party will mobilise people and organise strong protests across the country against the selective targeting of opposition leaders and the attacks on democratic rights.

[cpim.org](http://cpim.org) 

See CPA statement, page 3



Pinarayi Vijayan. Photo: Sanu N – wikimedia.org (CC BY-SA 4.0)

**courts have observed that Vijayan has no connection with the Exalogic case, yet the political witch-hunt continues**

## Samsung union puts off strike

**The Samsung Electronics union has said that it would suspend a planned strike and put a tentative wage deal with management to a vote, alleviating immediate concerns about the operation of the world's largest memory chip maker.**

The announcement followed a last-minute government-mediated negotiation with management over the level of workers' bonus payouts to reflect soaring profits fuelled by the global boom in artificial intelligence.

Union leader Choi Seung Ho told a televised briefing that the union agreed not to go ahead with

an 18-day strike. He said union members would vote on the tentative agreement.

"We would like to express our apologies to the people for causing concerns due to our internal conflicts," Choi said. "The agreement is the result of our all-out struggle spanning about six months."


"The company will faithfully implement the terms of this agreement and will make its utmost efforts to promote labour-management co-operation," he said.

Government officials earlier had threatened to invoke rarely used emergency powers to force a settlement at Samsung, as the planned strike looked set to hit

global semiconductor supplies and the country's trade-dependent economy. The union represents more than 70,000 workers.

Earlier the union and the management held each other responsible for a failure to reach a deal, after their previous round of negotiation ended without a breakthrough.

Choi accused management of refusing to accept a government-mediated proposal, whose details he refused to disclose, while the management accused the union of calling for excessive compensation packages for workers at loss-making units.

[Morning Star](http://Morning Star) 

## Russia accuses BBC of ignoring dormitory attack

**Twenty-one students died and dozens more were injured as a result of a Ukrainian drone attack on a high school building and a dormitory in Starobelsk, the Lugansk People's Republic.**


More than 50 foreign journalists have headed to the scene of the attack carried out by the Ukrainian military on a college dormitory in Starobelsk in the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR), said a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova.

"Media representatives from 19 countries have arrived in the Lugansk People's Republic: Austria, Brazil, Britain, Hungary, Venezuela, Germany, Greece,

Spain, Italy, Qatar, China, Cuba, Lebanon, the UAE, Pakistan, the United States, Turkiye, Finland, and France.

"Tokyo prohibited its journalists from taking part in the trip. The BBC officially declined. CNN is on vacation," said Zakharova.

On the night of 22 May, Ukraine attacked an academic building and dormitory at the Starobelsk Professional College, which is part of the Lugansk State Pedagogical University. There were 86 students and an employee in the building at the time.

[Sputnik](http://Sputnik) 

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# Bolivia blockades deepen a national crisis

According to the latest official report from the Bolivian Highway Administration (ABC), there are now 89 active blockade points on roads across six departments. The hardest-hit areas are La Paz, Cochabamba, Chuquisaca, Oruro, Potosí, and Santa Cruz, where key highways remain cut off and transport is severely disrupted. La Paz has emerged as the centre of the protest movement and the most heavily affected region.

The blockades began with sector-specific demands tied to fuel supply problems and technical objections to Law 1720, a law allowing small farms to be seized and sold. They have since expanded into broader political demands, including formal calls for President Rodrigo Paz to resign. What started as a transport and supply dispute has become a nationwide confrontation involving multiple social and economic actors.

The ABC report says major trunk roads connecting western Bolivia, the valleys, and part of the eastern lowlands remain completely interrupted. Beni, Pando, and Tarija are reporting only partial transit conditions, including vehicle restrictions, mandatory detours, and debris-clearing work on certain routes. The result is a fragmented transportation map that continues to isolate whole regions.

The social crisis has worsened rapidly after the number of blockade points recently doubled. La Paz and El Alto are facing near-total paralysis because of an indefinite urban transport strike and a severe shortage of fuel at service stations. For many residents, basic mobility has become impossible.

The pressure has spread into the commercial sector. Merchant associations have warned of an imminent total shortage of goods in popular markets and supply centres if heavy cargo trucks remain stranded on the roads. That threat matters because Bolivia's blockades are now affecting both distribution networks and everyday household access to food.

The Bolivian Workers' Central (COB) has also hardened its position and called for a national march in support of the mobilised bases. Transport unions say they are continuing the strike because previous agreements with the government were not honoured. Their main demands include economic compensation for mechanical damage to fleet engines caused by allegedly poor-quality imported gasoline, as well as the immediate publication of technical reports promised weeks ago in coordination with the state university.

Telesur 🇷🇺



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## Global Briefs

**US:** United States Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth discussed key foreign policy issues for Washington at a defence summit in Singapore. Among other things he had a message to the US allies. "The era of the United States subsidising the defence of wealthy nations is over. We need partners, not protectorates. We don't have a strong alliance unless everyone has skin in the game. No freeloading."

See 'Peace Notes' page 7 for a perspective on this.

**CUBA:** Cuba has been distributing donated powdered milk from Mexico and Uruguay as the island faces shortages and a deepening economic crisis due to the US criminal blockade. Officials say children, pregnant women, and paediatric facilities will be prioritised.

**MALTA:** The Maltese Labour Party (PL) won an unprecedented fourth term in a victory for Prime Minister Robert Abela. "This is a victory of all the people based on the program we presented for all the people," Abela told reporters. Malta's economy grew four per cent last year, but there are concerns the conflict in the Middle East could have an impact on the tourism that the country heavily depends on. Malta is the smallest and most densely populated country in the European Union, with about 550,000 people living in 316 sq km. The island economy is based largely on tourism, online gaming, and financial services. It has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU.

**KENYA:** Kenya's High Court halted a US-backed plan to build an Ebola quarantine facility at the country's Laikipia Air Base intended for Americans potentially exposed to the virus. The US planned to commit US\$13.5 million to establish the facility. The petition filed by Kenya's Katiba Institute argued that the project could create a public health risk in a country that has not reported any Ebola cases. The petition also alleged an "imminent threat to life" if interim orders were not granted.

**POLAND:** Polish President Karol Nawrocki said he would seek to strip Ukrainian President Zelensky of Poland's highest order after Ukraine named a military unit after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which was responsible for murdering more than 100,000 Polish civilians. The so-called Volyn massacre is classified as genocide by Poland. Zelensky had received the Order of the White Eagle from then-president Duda in 2023 for "contribution to Polish-Ukrainian relations, democracy, peace, and security in Europe."

**UK:** Citing soaring energy prices and disrupted trade, UK firms have scaled back hiring, according to the British Office for National Statistics. UK employers axed 100,000 jobs in April, the steepest monthly drop in five years and the latest sign that a weakening labour market is being dragged down by the prolonged conflict in the Middle East.

**BULGARIA:** Bulgaria's new Prime Minister Rumen Radev has said that US military aircraft won't be able to use Sofia's "Vassil Levsky" airport for stay and refuelling after the US failed to approve a visa-free system for Bulgarian citizens. "We are extending the permission until the end of June so we can give time to our allies to reschedule and find another location," Radev said.

**WALES:** New Zealand author Sarah Wynn-Williams has been forced to sit in silence during a panel discussion about her book at a writers' festival. Wynn-Williams is a former Facebook executive whose book about her time at Facebook *Careless People: A Cautionary Tale of Power, Greed and Lost Idealism* has been the subject of legal action from Meta, Facebook's parent company. Wynn Williams faces a fine of just under \$70,000 for every time she speaks disparagingly of the company.

# France bars Ben-Gvir entry, pushes EU sanctions

France has announced that it has banned Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir from entering French territory following international outrage over footage showing detained activists from the Global Sumud Flotilla being mistreated after Israeli forces intercepted the convoy.

The move marked one of the strongest European measures taken so far against a sitting Israeli minister and reflected widening diplomatic fallout from Israel's seizure of the flotilla.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said the decision followed what he described as "unacceptable actions" against French and European citizens who participated in the Gaza-bound flotilla.

"France cannot tolerate French nationals being threatened, intimidated, or brutalised," Barrot said, specifically criticising the conduct of a serving Israeli government minister.

He added that Ben-Gvir's actions formed part of "a long list of shocking statements and

actions, incitements to hatred and violence against Palestinians."

Barrot also expanded his criticism beyond France's national response.

"Like my Italian colleague, I call on the European Union to also impose sanctions on Itamar Ben-Gvir," he wrote on social media.

The French move followed widespread circulation of footage showing Ben-Gvir among detained activists after Israeli forces intercepted the flotilla in international waters.

The footage showed dozens of activists kneeling in tightly packed rows with their hands bound behind their backs.

Israeli music played in the background while Ben-Gvir appeared, waving an Israeli flag and taunting detainees.

The clip was circulated under the caption "Welcome to Israel." The images generated immediate criticism internationally and within Israel itself.

The flotilla had departed from Türkiye carrying 428 activists from 44 countries aboard approximately 50 vessels in an effort to challenge Israel's blockade on Gaza.

Israeli forces intercepted the convoy and transferred participants to Ashdod pending deportation procedures.

France's move quickly became part of a wider European response.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani requested that EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas place possible sanctions against Ben-Gvir on the agenda of the next meeting of European foreign ministers.

Irish Prime Minister Micheál Martin also requested formal discussion at the upcoming EU summit concerning Israel's treatment of European citizens aboard the flotilla.

Spain similarly joined calls supporting sanctions measures.

The growing pressure reflected increasing concern among European governments regarding the treatment of foreign nationals participating in humanitarian initiatives linked to Gaza.

Inside Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly criticised Ben-Gvir's handling of the detained activists.

Netanyahu said Ben-Gvir's conduct was



"not in line with Israel's values and norms," despite previously condemning the flotilla itself and describing the mission as a "malicious scheme."

The Global Sumud Flotilla represented the latest international effort seeking to challenge the blockade imposed on Gaza since 2007. The incident has also intensified scrutiny over Israel's treatment of international activists and could increase pressure for broader European measures against senior Israeli officials.

*Palestine Chronicle* ✪

## Social media: Vietnam chooses education over bans

Vietnam has chosen an approach to social media that combines regulation with education instead of imposing outright bans.

Under Vietnam's Cybersecurity Law and Decree 147/2024 on Internet services and online information management, children under 16 registering social media accounts must use information belonging to parents or guardians.

Parents are also responsible for supervising the content their children access, post, and share online.

The approach emphasises not only legal accountability but also the central role of families in guiding children through the digital age.

Still, framing the debate simply as 'ban or not ban' risks overlooking the psychology of adolescence. For many teenagers, social media functions as a place for connection, entertainment, learning, and identity formation. Blanket prohibitions can provoke resistance, encourage work-arounds, and push young users toward less regulated platforms.

Restrictions on social media use among minors should not be viewed as simplistic punishment.

They should be understood as protective boundaries designed to safeguard emotional development, self-control, and psychological maturity. Education has always recognised the importance of age-appropriate limits.

Just as children are not allowed to drive vehicles or consume harmful substances before reaching maturity, so regulating social media access can be seen as a preventive measure for healthy development.

Age verification systems, screen-time limits, content moderation, and stronger accountability for technology companies are all necessary steps. Schools must also expand digital literacy education, psychological support services, and online safety training.

The core value of education is to help children develop inner self-regulation.

Long-term safety cannot rely solely on constant surveillance, but it depends on whether young people can recognise risks and adjust their own behaviour responsibly. It is also necessary to raise urgent questions about the social responsibility of technology companies, regulators, and tech investors.

A society cannot claim to embrace digital innovation while placing profits above the safety of children. Algorithms cannot remain indifferent to the emotional harm, addictive behaviours, and toxic content increasingly woven into the daily lives of young users.

A healthy digital environment is built not only through advanced technology but also through ethical standards, social responsibility, and a commitment to protecting vulnerable users, especially children and adolescents.

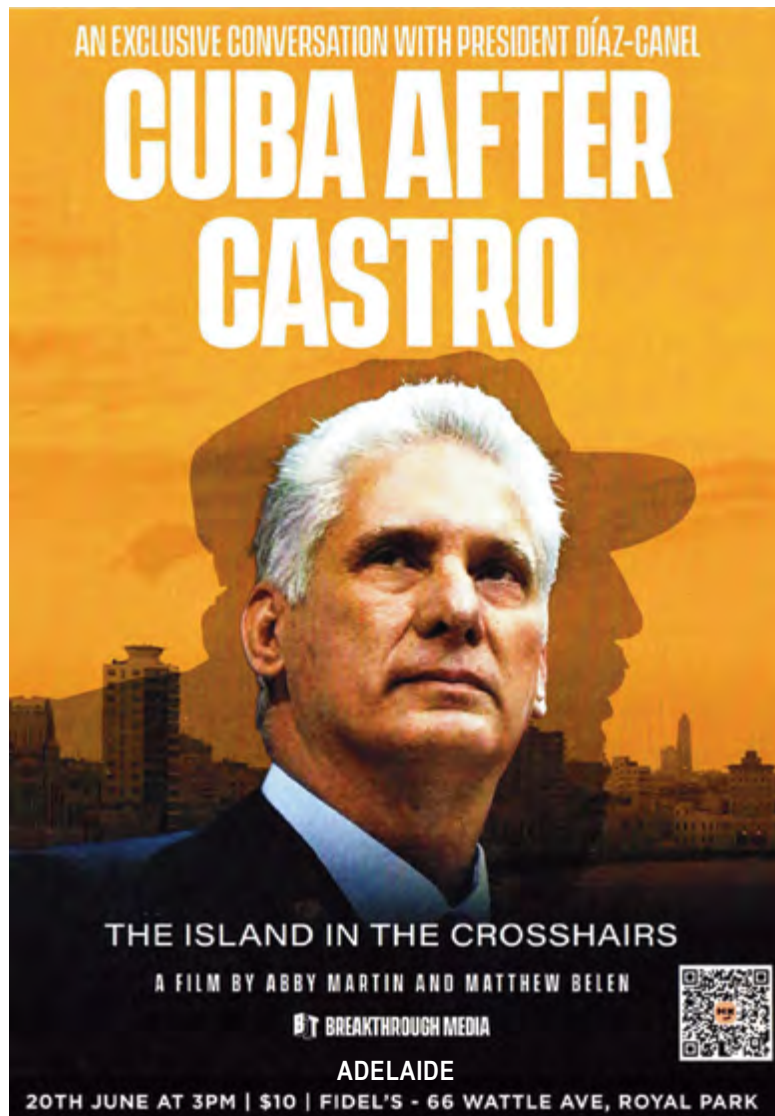
Within this broader picture, parents hold a uniquely important role. Government Decree 147/2024

is not merely an administrative regulation, but also a reminder that family guidance remains essential in the digital era.

Many parents attempt to manage their children's online activity while overlooking a deeper issue: loneliness in real life often drives children to seek refuge online. Young people cannot develop healthy social media habits if adults disengage from their emotional lives.

Many parents are handing smartphones to children as entertainment devices without paying close attention to what content they consume, who influences them online or what psychological struggles they may be facing. In reality, children learn more from adult behaviour than from repeated warnings.

*Vietnam News* (edited for space) ✪



## Communist Party of Ireland speaks up for Cuba

### Statement by the Communist Party of Ireland

**The Communist Party of Ireland condemns the escalation of US attacks against the sovereign Republic of Cuba and, in particular, the illegal "indictment" of the revolutionary leader and former President of the Republic, Raúl Castro Ruiz.**

The US has long been a rogue state that disregards international law and the United Nations Charter, as it sponsors and commits acts of terrorism around the world. It uses its economic and military power to destabilise countries that refuse to bow to its domination.

It "justifies" its actions in the Americas by citing the Monroe Doctrine, a decree unilaterally promulgated by the US that lacks international legal validity. The US believes it is above international law, while maintaining that US domestic law has universal application.

The so-called "indictment" against Raúl Castro is nothing more than the latest attempt to criminalise the Cuban Revolution and the struggle for national

liberation and socialism. The United States has blockaded Cuba since the revolution. Successive US administrations have attempted to invade the country, assassinate its leaders, sabotage its economy, commit acts of terrorism within the country, and threaten to sanction any country or company that sells it oil. All to no avail; Cuba remains defiant and sovereign.

The current US regime, following its recent failure in Iran, is seeking a military victory and is preparing to invade Cuba under the pretext of its "indictment" against Raúl Castro. Now is the time to mobilise in support of Cuba.

All those who believe in the right of small nations to determine their own future must condemn the actions of the US and support Cuba and Raúl Castro.

Those who believe in international law and the United Nations Charter must condemn this new attempt by the US to assert that its domestic legislation has universal application. ✪

# South Korean Activists Recount Israeli Abuse

**South Korean activists detained after a Gaza aid mission have accused Israeli soldiers of torture, sexual violence, and severe physical abuse.**

After their return to South Korea, three activists detained during the Global Sumud Flotilla described torture and sexual abuse in Israeli custody.

Detainees said Israeli soldiers used tasers, beatings, and humiliating treatment against activists.

The testimonies emerged days after reports that the UN had added Israeli entities to a sexual violence blacklist.

According to South Korea's Yonhap News Agency, activists Kim Ah-hyun, Kim Dong-hyeon, and Korean-American Jonathan Victor Lee described the abuses during a news conference held days after their release and return home.

Three South Korean activists detained during a

humanitarian mission to Gaza said they were subjected to torture, beatings, and sexual abuse by Israeli soldiers following the interception of their vessel in international waters.

The three were among hundreds of international activists aboard the Global Sumud Flotilla, a Gaza-bound humanitarian mission intercepted by Israeli forces while attempting to challenge Israel's blockade on the besieged Strip.

"The men were tortured with tasers, while the women were sexually harassed and sexually assaulted," Kim Ah-hyun said during the briefing.

"We could hear the sounds of the soldiers mocking and giving orders, and the sounds of the travellers being beaten. The screams were so long; it was suffocating," she added.

*Palestine Chronicle* 🇵🇸



## Women and FIFO

GH

Women working in Australian FIFO (Fly In Fly Out) mining and oil and gas operations have had a wide range of experiences, from enjoying the pay, independence, and technical work, to blatant sexism, sexual harassment, and feeling isolated in a male environment. The increasing number of women working in these sites is slowly changing the workplace culture.

At BHP Petroleum, the first women to work as on-site geologists and engineers were in the early 1980s, having pride in operating in important technical systems. Many found FIFO sites were professionally supportive, and they liked developing friendships with the men. They enjoyed the benefits of higher wages far above average incomes, the financial independence, and better career opportunities progressing more rapidly than in head offices.

There is also a growing number of Indigenous women working in mining and resource projects, especially in Western Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory through land agreements, ranger programs, environmental monitoring, and community employment initiatives.

Women commonly work in heavy equipment operations, truck driving, engineering, geology and geophysics, health-and-safety, camp management and healthcare, trades, maintenance, administration and logistics. Internationally, women in oil and gas drilling are statistically less likely than men to die in workplace accidents. However, injury, fatigue, mental health strain, and harassment remain significant concerns in remote operations.

Mining is one of Australia's more dangerous industries with a fatality rate of 3.4 deaths per 100,000 workers in 2024. That year there were ten mining deaths, 39 per cent above the recent five-year average.

Women are less likely to have fatalities or accidents with trucks and heavy equipment, and a recent study has shown that women workers have lower overall mortality than male miners. Women are not immune to the risks of mining. Some female-heavy job categories showed elevated risks of accidental death and suicide, especially among cleaners and production workers in isolated FIFO environments.

Work sites have improved since the 1980s as more women now work on crews and younger workers are less tolerant of sexist behaviour. Companies now provide better security in camps and companies enforce anti-harassment rules more aggressively. Experiences vary greatly between companies, sites, contractors, and crews. Some women describe supportive workplaces with strict safety culture, while others described entrenched 'blokey' environments and fear of retaliation for complaints.

One former worker told News Corp she felt treated like "a piece of meat." A cleaner interviewed during the Rio Tinto workplace review investigation said, "Every day there is sexual harassment." A former FIFO truck driver described her fear and anxiety after alleged harassment on a Pilbara mine site: "I was scared that I was going to be taken advantage of."

Women did not like being called patronising names, such as 'sweetie' or 'baby.' Sexual comments and propositions make them feel unsafe walking around camps at night far from the nearest city. They are labelled being 'difficult' after they submit complaints and feel pressured not to report misconduct. Recent class actions against major mining corporations alleged widespread harassment and assault at FIFO sites.

The 2022 West Australian parliamentary FIFO inquiry heard evidence of alleged rapes and assaults, women locking doors with furniture for safety, harassment by supervisors, and the fear of losing their jobs for reporting abuse. The inquiry concluded sexual harassment in parts of the FIFO sector was 'endemic.' The Mining and Engineering Union (MEU) is pressing for the WA government to have state-wide standards and for employers to take action to made the FIFO workplaces really safe.

Mining executive Rowena Smith said hearing women facing mistreatment was "So disappointing." It's a lot worse than that. All workers deserve a workplace that's safe in every sense of the word. Women and their unions need to keep being difficult. There's a long way to go in FIFO.

Sydney Vigil

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# Lebanon: Israel attacks

P Farmer

**“Every day is bringing a new expansion in Israel’s war against Hezbollah.” The BBC’s bland phrase conceals a brutal land grab that is killing Lebanese civilians and igniting more resistance to Israeli expansionism, both in Lebanon and in Israel itself.**

There’s a ceasefire in effect, but Israel has violated it many times. *Al Jazeera’s* Obaida Hitto has said that the “illusion” of a ceasefire is entirely gone.

Israel has attacked southern Lebanon. Despite threatening Beirut, it has not struck the Lebanese capital at time of writing. Israel earlier warned it would act with “extreme force” and told residents to move north of the Zharani River.

According to the Lebanese health ministry the strikes killed at least 11 people. Israeli forces have also attacked Tyre where at least 15 people were killed.

Israel likes to call its strikes “targeted,” but there have been reports of a drone strike killing six people in a family trying to flee one of the villages Israel threatened.

Large numbers of fleeing people have strained emergency services in Lebanon to breaking point.

## LAND GRAB

Israel has declared a “buffer zone” inside Lebanon, but there are fears it will become a permanent expansion of Israeli territory. Israel’s Finance Minister has called for the Israel attack to end “with a different reality entirely ... with the change of Israeli’s borders.” Netanyahu has not responded to requests for comment.

In the current attacks, Israel has advanced beyond the Litani River in southern Lebanon for the first time since 2006. Israel has declared the river the perimeter of its “buffer zone,” supposedly for safety against attacks by Hezbollah, but looking very permanent.

*Al Jazeera* reports that Israeli forces are encircling the city of Nabatieh in preparation for a possible assault on the city. Nabatieh is a Shia-majority city that is a cultural hub for the region as well as being key to southern Lebanon’s economy.

On 31 May, Israel announced that it had seized Beaufort Castle, a 13th century fort and strategic position. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz called the capture an important tactical victory.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has denounced the “dangerous and unprecedented” escalation of Israeli violence. He described Israel’s actions as part of a “scorched-earth policy.”

25 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Lebanon since 2 March.

## BACKSTORY

Lebanon celebrates Resistance and Liberation Day on 25 May, the date the Israeli was pushed back by Hezbollah fighters in 2000. The

Israeli army had entered Lebanon in June 1982 in pursuit of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, reaching as far north as Beirut, and had retreated to the south by 1985, where it remained for fifteen years until it was forced out by Hezbollah fighters. The day is still a public holiday, but celebrations are subdued this year.

Israel is attacking not just during a ceasefire, but also during talks with the Lebanese government on how to arrange security that’s acceptable to both governments.

During a recent visit to Israeli troops, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s warmongering Prime Minister was belligerent, announcing that attacks would continue, including attacks on Beirut.

Israel’s aggression has led some to conclude that it’s an unstoppable force, but some analysts have suggested that it has been taken by surprise by Hezbollah’s resilience and ability to inflict damage on the IDF. Hezbollah has been

successfully targeting Israeli forces and tanks.

Netanyahu is facing political pressure at home from Israelis tired of insecurity and war. The war is always sold to them as a way of ending the insecurity, but seems to just fuel more war and more insecurity. Israelis are tired of being at war, and recent polling suggests Netanyahu would be out of government if an election were held now.

## SEXUAL ABUSE

A UN report says that 31 cases of sexual violence by Israeli forces against Palestinians have been verified in Gaza and the West Bank.

Typically, Israel has responded by rejecting all allegations and announcing that it will break off relations with the UN Secretary General’s office.

Violations such as forced nudity, rape and gang rape were verified by the office of UN Secretary General António Guterres. ✪

**Israel has declared a ‘buffer zone,’ but there are fears it will become a permanent expansion of Israeli territory**

## Gaza – the attacks continue

**Palestinians in Gaza City gathered on 28 May for funeral prayers for 10 people killed in Israeli strikes the night before, including five children and an elderly person, as well as a Hamas fighter.**

More than 20 people were injured in the strikes, according to al-Shifa Hospital. Video from the scene showed flames pouring from an upper-floor window of a building, while bystanders rushed to carry wounded people, including children, to ambulances.

Mohammed Shawish, who was wounded and lost his wife in the strikes, broke down in tears as he held her body at the hospital morgue, saying, “I married my wife for love. For God’s sake, I chose her because of love.”

The strikes took place on the first day of Eid al-Adha, or the “Feast of Sacrifice,” a major Islamic holiday. The Israeli military said it had launched strikes in the northern Gaza Strip targeting two Hamas militants.

Among those killed was Hamas fighter Imad Islem. Mourners carried his body wrapped in a white shroud with a Hamas flag draped over it. His death came as a shock to the family, even though they knew it could happen at any time, his cousin Nidal Islem said.

The strikes came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was expanding its control in Gaza. He said: “Right now, we are tightening the grip on Hamas.”

“We are now in 60 per cent of the territory of the Gaza Strip. You know that? We were at 50 per cent, we moved to 60 per cent.” He said the next step was to move to 70 per cent control, with Israel “tightening the grip” on Hamas “from every direction.” Netanyahu added: “The most important thing is to continue leveraging our power, to increase it.”

*Morning Star* ✪



Perth/Boorloo rally for Palestine.



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