SEARCH Foundation

SUBMISSION TO IPAN PEOPLE'S INQUIRY INTO THE COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE US ALLIANCE

INTRODUCTION

The SEARCH Foundation congratulates IPAN on this important initiative to hold a public inquiry into the costs of the US Alliance with Australia.

The Australian community has a history of opposing wars and conscription for wars, and the SEARCH Foundation draws on the legacy of the Communist Party of Australia as a major component of the anti-war movement in Australia in the 20th Century, and the SEARCH Foundation itself contributed significantly to the movements in opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in this century. Other enduring components of the anti-war movement has been sections of the trade union movement and the Labor Party, Christian churches, most of the women's movement and independent intellectuals.

The experience of the massive carnage in World War I, along with the Russian Revolutions of 1917 which were also a reaction to the war, was a major factor in the creation of the Communist Party of Australia in 1920, and its opposition to imperialist wars was steadfast from the start.

The speaking tour of the famous Czech writer Egon Kisch in 1934-35 was primarily to give an international perspective to a conference in Melbourne to counter British Empire war preparations. Kisch didn't get to speak to the All Australian Congress of the Movement Against War and Fascism held at the Port Melbourne Town Hall, Melbourne on 10–12 November 1934, but he did get to speak in many locations in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland in the following three months.

Kisch's visit was part of a major turning in the Australian left towards anti-fascism and demands for collective security in the League of Nations against the threats or war emerging from Italy, Germany and Japan. Soon after, with the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the Australian communists were sending volunteers to fight or work as nurses and drivers in support of the Spanish Republic against Franco's fascists and their Nazi and Italian fascist allies.

The League of Nations failed, because of divisions among the big powers about whether to unite against the very real fascist threat of Hitler and Mussolini, or to unite against the contrived "communist threat" of the Soviet Union. The Australian communists dropped their anti-fascist line and reverted to a World War I-style anti-imperialist war position in September 1939. They were banned because of this in June 1940, and only changed their position to support for the war effort when Hitler and Mussolini invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. About 3,000 Australian communist party members fought in the Australian forces in World War II, wholeheartedly prosecuting the anti-fascist struggle again.

In a world exhausted by war, the few years after 1945 held out a chance for peace between nations, supervised by the newly-formed United Nations, itself based clearly on human rights. However the Cold War soon came into play, with the world sharply divided between the "West" and the "Soviet Bloc" by 1949. Nuclear weapons were now part of the war scenarios, and China too had a revolution and joined the Soviet bloc. In this new situation, the Australian left, the anti-war churches, parts of the unions and Labor Party and other figures joined in global and national movements to ban nuclear weapons and to oppose war. From December 1949, they were up against a Menzies

government that was fiercely anti-communist, pro-British and pro-US, and ready for war. The Korean War, the Malayan War and then the Vietnam War followed, with the latter involving conscription and being the biggest military exercise for Australia since World War II. The anti-Vietnam War movement in Australia was tumultuous, instigating far-reaching social, cultural and political transformation. Following the Soviet / Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the CPA and the left more broadly moved away from defending Soviet foreign policy and advocated for Australia to adopt an independent non-aligned non-nuclear foreign policy.

The massive cost of the Vietnam War led to a pause in Australian military commitments that only broke with the commitment of naval forces to the First Gulf War in 1991, which then led to Australia's participation in "coalitions of the willing" to invade Afghanistan and Iraq after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

During the 1970s and since there were several people's, women's and Christian protest camps staged at the US Pine Gap Base, as well as at Nurrungar, and one to North West Cape, maintaining a high level of focus on the danger and costs of Australia's military alliance with the USA. There was a parallel movement from the mid-1970s against the mining and export of uranium from Australia, from First Nations' lands, with a strong component of opposition to nuclear weapons.

During the Reagan presidency there was a nuclear arms race between the US and the Soviet Union, with a heightened danger of nuclear war in Europe using intermediate range nuclear missiles and cruise missiles, and there were mass protests in Australia at this time. This movement only subsided with disarmament agreements between President Reagan and President Gorbachev in 1986.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact in 1989-91, there was a period of total US global dominance but also another opportunity for peace between nations. This ended with escalating US pressure on Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, and uninhibited military ambition by the second Bush presidency following the 9/11 shock.

The Australian Howard Coalition government was determined to take Australia to war along with President Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. Prime Minister Howard also boosted spending in schools to provide intensive education about the ANZAC legacy, and at the same time legitimise and even glorify war.

When Howard was taking the country to war in Iraq in 2002, but telling the Australian public that he wasn't, a huge movement developed against any invasion of Iraq. In fact, this was the strongest anti-war movement in Australia's history. The SEARCH Foundation was one component of this movement, which united all traditional elements of the anti-war movement plus new immigrant communities from Western Asia, against the war. The participation of the Labor Party and the trade unions was an important factor in its size and reach. This movement did not succeed, but the utter disaster of the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has greatly discredited the US and Australian pro-war political forces.

1. First Nations' Peoples

Military activity has serious impacts on First Nation's Peoples, from the lack of recognition of their participation in WW1 and WW2, to the devastation of their land and their displacement in South Australia by British atomic testing at Maralinga in the 1950s and 60s, appropriation of their land for the Pine Gap US intelligence gathering facility and for military exercises today. The Joint Defence Facility at Pine Gap was established on the lands of the Arrernte people southwest of Alice Springs

in1966 and has been operational since 1970. All of these activities by the Australian State violate the right of First Nations' Peoples to self-determination.

In Queensland land was 'returned' under Native Title but access has been restricted and damage to sites continues due to use for international military exercises.

2. Economic

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the defence budget is growing by around 9% this year, to $42.7 billion. At 2.19% of GDP (based on the Budget papers' prediction of GDP), that easily meets the government's commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defence by 2020–21. The average daily expenditure on defence and related activities is $117,112,446.58.[1]

This expenditure to maintain and extend the defence relationship with the US is money that should be directed to health, education and a range of other social welfare needs of Australian citizens, and to genuine development assistance to poor nations, especially in our region. It is not in our best interests to be supporting foreign wars being waged by despotic governments to which the US has allied itself.

The Defence Export Strategy including the plan to make Australia one of the top ten armaments exporters, is particularly concerning since there is no transparency about the destination of weapons exports[2] to Governments accused by human rights organisations of serious human rights violations and war crimes. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Sri Lanka have been recipients of Australian-manufactured weapons which are being used in Yemen causing widespread death, destruction and displacement of populations. The only scrutiny of export permits is the Senate Estimates Committee where, in 2019, a Defence Department official claimed that issues such as human rights abuses were rigorously assessed before officials grant export permits. Only the Minister can deny permits.[3]

It seems likely that not only is the Australian public kept ignorant of these activities, but also most of our elected representatives.

In the Brisbane/Ipswich/Gold Coast area alone there are 14 companies manufacturing a range of products, including weapons and weapons systems. As at 16 May 2021, there are 26 job vacancies in these companies. Those firms could instead be manufacturing socially useful products for the health, disability, education and infrastructure sectors which would also provide jobs instead of products that are used in places like Yemen to deliver death and destruction.

An independent foreign policy, would allow trade and investment conflicts with other countries such as China, to be resolved with diplomacy and mutual good will, without resorting to veiled threats of armed conflict or fears of offending great and powerful friends such as the US. Defence spending could be redirected to rebuild our manufacturing industries and rebuild our economy.

3. Social and Community

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[1] **The Cost of Defence 2020–2021** *Part 2: ASPI 2020–2021 Defence Budget Brief, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October 2020.*

[2] Ibid

[3] Australian weapons shipped to Saudi and UAE as war rages in Yemen, The Guardian, June 2019

The US pushes its allies including Australia, to commit 2% of GDP to defence spending and the Morrison government is more than willing to comply at significant cost to our social and community wellbeing. In the May 2021 Budget $270B will be allocated over 10 years and with the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the focus of Australian activities will be the Indo-Pacific region, despite the fact that no country in the region is a threat to us.

What is Australia's contribution to the deployment of 2,500 US Marines in Darwin under an agreement entered into by the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard and President Barack Obama in 2012, for the US to deploy up to 2,500 Marines in Darwin – the Marine Rotational Force? There are surely many other peaceful and productive economic activities.

This government's huge defence spending is at the expense of funding for:

- community legal services and women's refuges;
- women and children escaping domestic violence,
- First Nations' Peoples – no additional funding for Closing the Gap,
- workers who cannot expect a pay rise until 2024-25;
- homelessness and affordable housing
- international development aid.

This short list does not include the many other social welfare services that citizens are entitled to expect from their government and of which the most disadvantaged members of our community are in urgent need.

The increased spending on childcare, employment programs, and aged care in the 2021 Budget falls far short of what is needed to make real and lasting improvements, while defence spending continues to increase.

4. Environment and Climate Change

Military activities place a number of stresses on the physical environment, but their contribution to over-all environmental deterioration has not received its share of attention. There are several reasons for this. One is that the military is not seen as an 'industry', yet in many ways it behaves like one. Another is that states operate a double standard: they are not willing to subject their armed forces to the levels of transparency and accountability that are required of other governmental or civil society actors.

Military activity affects the physical environment in the following direct ways: -- pollution of the air, land, and water in peacetime -- the immediate and long-term effects of armed conflict -- militarisation of outer space -- nuclear weapons development and production – alienation of land. In addition we must consider the issue of indirect effects via diversion of resources.[4]

Greenhouse gas emissions resulting from military activity are proving difficult to quantify owing to the lack of reliable reporting. However multilateral exercises such as the annual Talisman Sabre exercises at Shoalwater Bay in Queensland consume vast quantities of fossil fuels and permanent ADF facilities also contribute to dangerous CO_2 emissions. Friends of the Earth in an article in July 2019 observed that the ADF's emissions are reported to be a mere 913 tons of CO_2, according to the

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[4] *THE MILITARY'S IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT: A NEGLECTED ASPECT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE* A Briefing Paper for States and Non-Governmental Organisations International Peace Bureau, Geneva August 2002

Australian National Inventory Report,[5] and the fuel used for military transport is less than 1% of all transport combined.[6] The Paris Climate Agreement does not mention a requirement for countries to report on their defence force's contribution to CO_2 emissions and governments are reluctant to hold them to the same standards of reporting and accountability as industry and other government agencies.

5. **Military and Defence**

Australia entered into a security alliance with the United States in the depth of World War II in 1942 in order to turn back the threat of invasion by militarist Japan. This initiative met with great success and remains the solid base of the Australia-US alliance in 2021, somehow absorbing all the damage done to Australia by its commitments of troops to fight alongside US forces in the decades since, in the Korean, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.

The US troops departed Australia at the end of World War II. It was in 1966 that the Holt Coalition government agreed to the US building a satellite intelligence base at Pine Gap, and in 1967 that it agreed to a US request to establish a nuclear submarine communications base at North West Cape, and in 1969 that the Gorton Coalition government agreed to the US base at Nurrungar, near Woomera, to provide "launch on warning" surveillance of enemy Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile and other rocket launches. Nurrungar and Pine Gap were used to target US bombing raids on Cambodia during the Vietnam War, and later in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. The Nurrungar functions were transferred to Pine Gap in 1999.

Since 2001, the US has also pushed Australia into ever-deeper military engagement in the Philippines under the mis-named "War on Terror".

The US military bases in Australia remain of high global strategic value to the US military, motivating US interference in Australian politics to ensure political support for these bases from any Australian government. This was partly revealed in the Wikileaks publication of US Embassy cables. These bases would be prime targets in any nuclear war and remain a grave threat to the Australian people. They lock Australia into the US nuclear war fighting strategy, which has put Australia into the minority in the international community which opposes or delays nuclear disarmament initiatives.

As well, Pine Gap plays a significant role in targeting airstrikes and drone strikes in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Libya, also undermining Australia' credibility as a nation which upholds the UN Charter and supports peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

This situation was exacerbated when the Gillard Labor government in 2011 agreed to host a US Marine Regimental Combat Team rotated through Darwin. It presents a clear threat of military intervention into South-East Asia from Australia, and further severely compromises Australia's independence in foreign policy.

Just as once the Australian navy and army were sub-units of the British navy and army, they are now largely sub-units of the US military. "Interoperability" is driven by the need for the US commanders to easily integrate with Australian forces, and by Australian forces who are always under-supplied

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[5] Australian National Inventory Report, http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/29eca947-af49-4ed1-8369-e68d74730cf9/files/national-inventory-report-2017-volume-1.pdf.

[6] *A military sized black hole - how big are the ADF's emissions?* Friends of the Earth 18 July 2019

compared to US forces in the field. However, this commitment to interoperability means that the US military industrial complex makes the final decisions about Australian military procurement decisions, and the level of Australian content in procurement.

The alternative to this situation is an Australian sovereign self-defence industry, which would probably cost more than relying on US interoperability, but would really enhance skills and employment in Australia and would also enable genuinely independent foreign policy decisions.

The human cost to Australian service personnel and their families from deployments in all wars has been devastating. However, the impact of serving in Viet Nam, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan appears to be worse than the experiences from World Wars I and II.

Data relating to military service since 2001 shows that the suicide rates for ex-service personnel are significantly higher than for the same age cohorts in the Australian population as a whole.

The age-adjusted rate of suicide, when compared to the Australian population was:

- 48% lower for serving men, SMR = 0.52 (95% CI = 0.42-0.64)

- 48% lower for men in the reserves, SMR = 0.52 (95% CI = 0.41-0.66)

- 18% higher for ex-serving men, SMR = 1.18 (95% CI = 1.02-1.35)

- 115% (or 2.15 times) higher for ex-serving women, SMR = 2.15 (95% CI = 1.33-3.29).

These differences were all found to be statistically significant.[7]

This kind of long-term human impact should make Australia's political leaders think long and hard before committing military forces to any conflict. The current "drums of war" talk about China is hugely irresponsible. Parliament should be the body that makes any decision to commit military forces to a conflict, thus at least forcing a public debate and providing time to consider before a vote is taken.

Huge psychological, social and environmental damage was done to the Korean people first by Japanese colonialism from 1905 and then from the post-WWII division of the country and especially the still-unresolved Korean War 1950-53. The Korean people remain divided and highly militarised, with both North and South ruled by authoritarian regimes. Australian governments have done nothing to end the war or contribute to healing this huge and ongoing damage.

This story was repeated on a larger scale in Vietnam. The Vietnamese people suffered violent invasion by French forces in the 19th century and ongoing colonial repression, and the violent struggle to end foreign domination by first France and then the United States of America. Australian governments supported the French war and then the US war in Vietnam, and committed army, navy and air forces to the Vietnam War from 1961-72. While a united Vietnam is now experiencing a sustained period of peace and rising prosperity, the war was highly divisive and in the end, generated a huge refugee outflow. Environmental, physical and psychological damage continues to this day. To some extent Australian governments have provided economic assistance and constructive trade and investment into Vietnam since the 1980s.

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[7] Data relating to military service, https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/national-veteran-suicide-monitoring/contents/comparing-suicide-rates-2002-to-2017.

6. **Foreign Policy**

Australia has only had a foreign policy since 1941 when the Curtin Labor government ratified the Statute of Westminster of 1930.

Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser described Australia's foreign policy as one of "strategic dependence" first on Britain and then on the United States.[8] There were brief periods of greater independence during the Chifley and Whitlam Labor governments.

The clear benefit to Australia of the US Alliance has been a lower than otherwise defence budget, since Australia expected to rely on US forces and military re-supply in the event of an armed threat to Australia.

However, the cost has been a perennial second-guessing of US commitment to the Alliance, and thus an eagerness to commit Australian military forces to the conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, and more recently, in the Philippines. These conflicts have come at a high human and material cost, have damaged Australia's democracy, and have not made the US commitment to the Alliance any more reliable.

Further, Australia's commitment to support US foreign policy has led it to support the incorporation of West Papua into Indonesia, the massacre of up to two million Indonesian civilians in the 1965-66 anti-communist purge, and the 1975 Indonesia invasion of Timor-Leste. One of the most long-standing problems arising from the US Alliance has been Australia's support for Israel in every vote at the UN Security Council and General Assembly, even when this has exposed Australia as part of tiny minority willing to defend the indefensible.

At the economic level, Australia routinely signs up to trade agreements that align with US corporate policy, even when there is no clear benefit to Australia and even when there is a clear detriment. Examples are the US-Australia Free Trade Agreement, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, even when the US is not a signatory in the CPTPP and RCEP.

In more recent years, Australia's dogged resistance to action on climate change has flowed partly from the US Alliance. Australia is now virtually a pariah on this issue.

The Howard Coalition government did show some independence from the US policy on Timor-Leste in 1999 by supporting Indonesian military insistence that it alone provide security for the UN-administered referendum in August that year, with deadly consequences. This also involved a denial of military intelligence to the US about the anti-independence militia violence in Timor-Leste. When Howard called for President Clinton to provide military intervention forces in September 1999, the US declined.

The cost of the US Alliance is now demonstrated in Australia's support for the US policy of containment and confrontation with China. In this case, Australia is directly provoking China on behalf of the US administration, and paying a real price in trade and broader relations with China.

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[8] Fraser, Malcolm, with Roberts, Cain (2014) Dangerous Allies, Melbourne University Publishing,

This has now reached the point where the Australian government is talking of war with China, which would only be very destructive for Australia and the entire region, if not the whole world.

It is on China that Australia's membership of the USUKA Agreement – the "Five Eyes" – has come to the fore, with this US-led spy system taking the initiative to ban Huawei from 5G communications networks, and to speak out on repression in Hong Kong and Xinjiang Province.

Australia's relatively good reputation as a global citizen has been steadily degrading because of the US Alliance, and so Australia's credibility with other nations has suffered.

7. **Political Rights**

US culture is pervasive in Australian society, and has far greater impact on the attitudes of Australian citizens than any directives coming from the State Department, the Defence Department or the White House. In recent decades the Murdoch media, and especially Fox News, have been a megaphone for the Republican Party and its more hawkish voices, with terrible effect in the Bush (2) and Trump administrations.

The Howard government abandoned Australian captive David Hicks to torture in the Guantanamo Bay gulag, and Australian captive Mamdouh Habib to torture in Egypt, purely because that is what the US government wanted during that lawless period following the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC.

Both Labor and Coalition governments have taken the same attitude to Australian Julian Assange, abandoning him to political persecution by the Obama, Trump and now Biden administrations because of his reporting on the US through several Wikileaks publications.

Australian business leader Phil Scanlan, together with his wife Julie Singer Scanlan, founded the Australian American Leadership Dialogue in 1992 with the support of then President George H W Bush, because they feared that the Australian people took the Alliance for granted. They felt the relationship had to be actively developed.[9]

Since 1992, selected leaders have gathered in various cities across the two nations to shape the direction of the bilateral relationship, through dialogue across seven key themes: economics and trade, security and defence, foreign policy, domestic politics, innovation and technology, energy and climate and education, health and social inclusion. Over the years, the AALD has had a profound impact across the Australian parliament, the media and academia, greatly strengthening the sense of strategic dependence on the US among these elite circles.

Under the Howard government, Australia agreed to gradually increase its military spending to 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product, a continually rising number. The Australian military spent $7.8 billion fighting the war in Afghanistan up to June 2011[10]. It spent about $540 million per year for five

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[9] http://www.aald.org/australian-american-leadership-dialogue.
[10]
https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BN/1011/MilitaryInvolvementAfghanistan.

years in the Iraq War,[11] and the cost of Australia's military effort against IS in Iraq and Syria from 2014-2020 was $1.3 billion.[12]

The relentless increase in military spending generates an industry of lobbyists and a political incentive to promote the military and to promote war. Defence contractors now sponsor university research.[13] In 2020, BAE Systems, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Palantir Technologies, Rolls Royce, Thales, were corporate partners of the Australian War Memorial in 2020.[14]

8. **Unions and Workers' Rights**

Australian workers and their union movement have suffered significant loss of rights and livelihood because of Australia's military alliance with the USA.

The main reason for this is that US authorities, particularly the State Department, CIA and NSA, included left wing Australian unions in their targeting for Cold War political control or elimination. The left unions and the Communist Party opposed war and nuclear weapons after World War II, and the US authorities saw this as opposition to their new-found global dominance.

On the economic front, Australian workers were able to engage in strong industrial action to improve their rights and living standards after World War II, and US investors, particularly General Motors and the Ford Motor Company, wanted tame-cat unions or no unions at all in their factories.

In 1949, the incoming Menzies Coalition government had a policy to ban the Communist Party and any organisation that might espouse policies similar to the Communist Party – particularly militant unions. At the same time, the US authorities were promoting the banning of communist parties in Germany, South Africa, Japan, where the bans were imposed, and in France, Italy where the effort failed, and suppressing communists in the US labor movement itself with significant success. Menzies was blocked by the High Court in 1950 and so proceeded to change the Constitution by referendum in 1951, only to be defeated by a very narrow margin in the popular vote.

The Menzies Coalition government, with significant CIA and State Department support, reverted to intense ASIO and police special branch surveillance of left Labor and communist union leaders and activists, organised anti-communist campaigns in union elections through the National Civic Council, blocked recruitment or promotion of communists in the public service, denied citizenship to immigrants with socialist leanings, and worked with private sector employers to sack militant workers suspected of communist membership or sympathies.

This Cold War in the union movement continued into the 1980s, with the political effect of keeping Labor out of federal government except for the Whitlam Labor government of 1972-75, until the Hawke – Keating Labor governments of 1983-96. It had the economic effect of extended wage suppression in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Australian trade union movement, including the left, maintained support for a local arms industry, naval ship construction and repair, and for aircraft maintenance, continuing from the huge

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[11] https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2011-03/apo-nid74411.pdf.

[12] https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1718/SyriaMilitaryOps#_Toc493682036.

[13] https://about.unimelb.edu.au/newsroom/news/2016/august/university-welcomes-lockheed-martin-to-melbourne; https://www.raytheon.com/au/ourcompany/corporateresponsibility.

[14] https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6753280/who-is-palantir-the-us-tech-company-mike-kelly-now-works-for/; https://www.awm.gov.au/get-involved/corporate-partnership.

effort required in World War II. This was done while unions, particularly the maritime unions, campaigned against Australian involvement in British and US-led wars, with a peak of protest during the Vietnam War and conscription.

From the time of the Hawke-Keating governments, Australian economic policy swung from Keynesian demand management to neoliberal privatisation, trade liberalisation and labour market deregulation. This was inspired by the "Washington Consensus" for these polices during the Reagan presidency and the Thatcher era in the UK. These policies empowered employers to suppress union membership, and eventually lead to a rapid increase in social inequality, cuts to social services, precarious work and wage stagnation.

The Australian labour movement is struggling to break from this neoliberal framework, and part of this effort has been to reject the US economic and social model, which continues to be promoted in Australia by well-organised corporate think tanks and industry associations, with prominent links to similar bodies in the US and the US Republican Party.