

Living Incomes For Everyone (LIFE) Submission to IPAN People's Enquiry into the US Alliance.

Aug 17th, 2021

Living Incomes For Everyone (LIFE) is a loose alliance of grass-roots community groups and unionists fighting for a decent, humane, standard of living for low-income people including the unemployed, casual workers, aged pensioners, single parents and their children, and people with disabilities and their carer's. Currently 88 such groups from across Australia endorse our demands. ([Click here](#) for more info.)

We strongly oppose the Federal Government's allocation of 570 billion dollars over the next ten years to a Defence Budget with the primary purpose of deepening Australia's embroilment in the US military industrial complex. This is not an allocation to strengthen Australia's sovereign defence but to support the military aims of the United States in the Indo-Pacific region consistent with our subservient alliance with them and our demeaning role as the USA's regional sheriff.

This allocation will fund massive subsidies to large arms manufacturers and dealers who pay little or no tax in Australia while producing weaponry and technology that is used in endless wars around the world. The race for profit these corporations compete for increases devastation and death for ordinary people in regional conflicts (for example the Philippines and West Papua) AND, escalates geopolitical tensions towards an unthinkable global war involving large state powers. The people most harmed through disruption and death by that weaponry are overwhelmingly poor people in other nations who wish to live peacefully.

The erroneously named 'defence budget' also entrenches and increases the evolving presence of US military personnel in Darwin and other intrinsic projects, like the Pine Gap intelligence facility (18 kilometres from Alice Springs) making non-military Australians a direct target in the event of war.

Juxtaposed with this obscene use of Government finances is the situation of so many of our own citizens and residents. Over 3 million people (including children) live below the poverty line, and several million hover around it or just manage to stay afloat while the cost of living for basic goods rises. 60% of all new jobs in the supposed covid-recovery (prior to the current devastation to people's livelihoods in NSW and Vic) were casual or part-time and mostly precarious. Minimum wage jobs, if you're lucky, are the new normal and, there is nothing adequate in investment from business or government to suggest decent jobs are coming back soon. This increases the pressure on working class families to pick up the financial slack for their children and other members.

At the beginning of Covid the Govt. effectively doubled unemployment benefits and single parent payments, instantly lifting hundreds of thousands of people out of poverty. Very quickly the rate was cut and cut again until now it is back to a soul-destroying \$44 per day. Many people are forced to skip one, sometimes two, meals a day, going without basic needs such as medication and health services, transport, heating and cooling, and homelessness has increased dramatically, 14% over the last year.

Concurrently the Aged Pension, and Disability Support Payment have effectively been frozen for years at poverty levels and below – people with the highest needs, living lives of bare existence.

A quick look at the decline in health services, public education, and public transport, because of cuts to funding and decades of privatisations and outsourcing, adds to this snapshot of the crisis so many ordinary people are experiencing.

What's more the housing crisis is approaching dire levels. Community groups in the housing area have been warning of this for quite some time, and now it's here. The private housing market is out of reach for most new homebuyers or, a mortgage that increases their debt to precarious levels. The unregulated rental market places rental living beyond the incomes of many, both in the urban centres and regional areas. Simultaneously, all strata of government ignore common sense proposals for an increase to public housing to reduce waiting lists and meet housing needs, making a perfect storm of homelessness, unsustainable pressure on services, and high occupation in homes not built for large numbers.

These are the pressing needs of the people: a living income, social security, health, education, housing, and services. The general socio-economic situation of ordinary Australians, exacerbated whilst not directly caused by the lockdowns and Covid crisis, is only likely to get worse without direct government intervention and commitment to lift the living standards of all.

This programme for life can be funded by re-directing funds from the death and destruction military budget, servicing a dangerous, self-defeating alliance with the USA. For the LIFE Campaign and most Australians, vital income and social supports for ordinary Australians is a moral imperative and a matter of urgency that must replace the immorality of war-making.