

Australian workers and youth oppose US-NATO war drive and Russia invasion

Our reporters**27 March 2022**

Australian workers and young people have spoken to the WSWS about their opposition to the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine. Australia's Liberal-National Coalition government has marched in lockstep with the US-led war drive, sending over a hundred million dollars in "lethal aid" to the Ukrainian government, its military and associated fascist paramilitary forces.

This has been fully supported by the Labor Party opposition. Its only criticism of the Coalition on the war front is that the government is not expanding Australia's military capacity rapidly enough, including for participation in a US-led war with China.

Military expenditure already exceeds \$600 billion this decade. The vast build-up must be paid for by the working class through increased attacks on social spending and the destruction working conditions

Vicki, who works in the court system in South Australia, said: "The media barrage is just propaganda. It is so one sided and biased. It is not informative but just surface sloganism: 'Big Bad Putin.' I'm not a Putin defender but it's just that I know what America and NATO get up to as well. I don't trust either of them."

She also referred to the recent ejection of a student from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's "Q+A" television show by journalist Stan Grant. "I was appalled by the treatment of that young university student. As soon as he raised the question of fascism in Ukraine, and Russians being killed, Stan Grant shut him down. They allowed members of the audience to shout him down and answered with the same nebulous rubbish. Then Stan Grant asked the questioner to leave. It was really hypocritical."

Vicki compared the pro-war media reportage with coverage of the pandemic. "The reporting of COVID is disgraceful. They are putting the economy above workers' lives and vulnerable people in our community

are being sacrificed for the economy. The campaign tells us we have to 'live with the virus,' but it's not based on science. While some of the epidemiologists are compliant with the government's objectives, the reputable epidemiologists all say that you can't live with the virus. It is obvious that you can't. The longer it goes on, the more likely it is that there will be more variants, possibly even more deadly," she said.

"Kids don't even have to wear masks anymore, but children are suffering from the long-term effects of the virus. Thirty percent of cases have long term issues. They are also finding scarring on the lungs. They don't care about the consequences as long as the economy keeps rolling on.

"When the war started, and there was great anxiety about nuclear war, the anxiety about COVID dissipated to some extent. They are trying to unify us to fight big bad Putin, rather than the bosses who are trying to force us back to work."

Robert, an electrician near Newcastle, a regional centre in New South Wales, said: "People are being told, 'Russia is horrible.' Now, I don't agree with Russia invading but people in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. No-one wants to talk of the atrocities done by the 'moral' countries.

"The US-led wars have not achieved anything. There was the war in Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, the 'war on terror.' There is also no critique of the Ukrainian government, which is another puppet regime of the US, just as they had a puppet regime in Afghanistan," he said.

Asked if the pandemic was helping fuel the drive to war, Robert replied: "I think there is a direct link, yes. They're trying to say, 'we've got covid under control.' I think this Russian invasion of Ukraine couldn't have come at a better time for them. It has distracted people.

"Honestly, the only news I read now is on the WSWS. This has been the case for many years. I don't watch the

mainstream news on TV or the papers. In my opinion, they're altering facts or trying to persuade people to think a certain way, which all comes back to the ulterior motive of making money.

"I'll tell you why workers should oppose the drive to war by asking this question: Who are the first people they put on the front lines? It's not the ruling class, it's the working class. There are many of us and we are deemed as expendable on both sides. After decades of wars, military operations, nothing good has come of it. The only thing the bourgeoisie has learnt is how to make bombs more lethal.

"We need to be thinking of how we can make life better, because under capitalism society is being sold off."

Michael, an IT worker from Queensland, said: "The drive of U.S. imperialism is to maintain its domination by military means in the face of China's growing economic and military power, as well as the accelerating decline of U.S. capitalism after the 2008 financial crisis.

"We must make our position clear to additional sections of the international working class, to alert them to the growing confrontation between the US and China, and to bring forth the understanding that only the abolition of the capitalist system through world socialist revolution can prevent humanity from plunging into the abyss."

Sofia, a student from Monash University in Melbourne, said: "There is a real danger of world war today. In the media every day, people are calling for a no-fly zone over Ukraine, which would see NATO forces firing on Russian airplanes. They're calling for even more aggressive actions. NATO is sending in weaponry and declaring economic war on Russia.

"It's also scary that Putin, and the US presumably, has put nuclear forces on alert. There have been so many close nuclear calls through recent history. It is very dangerous to have two nuclear powers at each other's throats like they currently are, and it isn't going to be contained in a small corner of Eastern Europe.

"There is opposition to war, despite the hysteria and propaganda all around. The vast majority of people don't want a war, they don't want people to be sent off to fight and die in a pointless conflict, or for citizens to be collateral damage.

"You cannot appeal to the governments who are escalating the situation. Instead, we need an independent anti-war movement, not tied to national boundaries or capitalist governments. That's the way forward in our current world, especially given how much opposition there is to the whole state of things now, like COVID,

war, growing inequality. The aim must be to unify those separate struggles into one."

Sofia spoke about the online WSWS meeting "Fight Covid! Save lives! Stop the drive to World War III!"

"The webinar presented the whole context of this crisis. Understanding the motivations behind Russia's invasion doesn't excuse it or make it forgivable. It's crucial to stand back and look objectively at the underlying historical context of what's happening now," she said.

"It gave a very succinct and clear analysis of the situation, especially compared to what we hear in the corporate media, which has been atrocious in its reporting of the current crisis.

"I thought David North made a really important point at the start: that it is bankrupt just to focus on who fired the first shot of a war. You must look at the social and political circumstances surrounding the conflict and its historical roots. That's what the webinar was about, looking at those surrounding circumstances.

"David North also made the point about how the domestic crisis leads to all these social, political and economic upheavals. The ruling classes in the US and its allies are having to establish a new basis of unity in a fractured environment. They establish this common ground on war hysteria.

"You see that in the role of the media and their campaigns against Russian citizens. Comparing it to the height of the Cold War, most respectable journalists and institutions didn't partake in these kinds of wild denunciations and calls for boycotting Russian athletes and musicians. That sort of thing was limited to the right-wing fringes, rather than the respectable press," she said.



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