

Australian billionaire sets up “Trumpet of Patriots” party

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In an unabashed bid to emulate the fascistic agenda of the Trump administration in the United States, Australian mining baron Clive Palmer last week announced that he had become the chairman and spokesman of a virtually unknown, re-badged party called Trumpet of Patriots (ToP).

Palmer said ToP, funded by him, would aim to stand candidates for every lower house and senate seat in the federal election that must be held by May 17. “Whatever is required to be spent will be spent,” he pledged.

Parroting Donald Trump, Palmer declared at his February 19 media conference that “Trumpet of Patriots will make Australia great again.” Largely based on iron ore and coal mining, Palmer is one of the wealthiest oligarchs in the country—worth an estimated \$A22.75 billion, according to the *Australian Financial Review* 2024 Rich List.

Like Trump and his associate Elon Musk, the richest person in the world, Palmer is seeking a fundamental realignment of the political system in line with the ever-increasing economic domination of society by capitalist oligarchs, such as himself.

Palmer’s wealth may not be in the same league as Musk’s \$US500 billion, and Palmer has suffered several previous political failures, but he and his backers are clearly calculating that Trump’s re-ascension to the White House has altered the political situation worldwide.

ToP’s first media release on February 19 proclaimed: “Amid a global shift in political sentiment, marked by the resurgent success of Donald Trump in the US and the rise of Argentina’s Javier Milei, a new force has announced its presence in Australian politics.”

At his media conference, Palmer denounced the right-wing Liberal-National Coalition led by Peter Dutton, as well as the Labor government headed by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

“Peter Dutton has stated that he’s no Donald Trump, and we agree with him,” he said. “Albanese presided over declining standard of living for our country in each and every year he served as prime minister. Australia needs Trump policies.”

Palmer specifically hailed the destruction of tens of thousands of public sector workers’ jobs and the shuttering of entire government agencies by Trump and Musk’s so-called Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). He

condemned both Dutton and Albanese for failing to bring “the hard questions to government departments that Elon Musk is doing in Washington at the moment.”

Likewise, Palmer aligned himself with the Trump White House’s mass deportations, blaming immigrants for the social crisis created by his own capitalist class. He said immigration was “destroying our infrastructure, roads, schools and hospitals, creates congestion and the destruction of communities.”

An immediate issue arises. How and why has Palmer—who only a week earlier lost a High Court bid to re-register his previous election vehicle, the United Australia Party (UAP)—been permitted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), to take over a re-badged registered political party?

Anti-democratic electoral laws were jointly pushed through parliament by the Coalition and Labor in 2021 to try to shore up the post-World War II two-party system and stifle growing political disaffection.

For parties without seats in parliament to get registered, and have the basic democratic right to have their party names alongside their candidates on voting papers, they must supply the AEC with the names and details of 1,500 members—treble the previous number.

That has almost halved, from 53 to 30, the number of registered parties, yet Palmer has been able to sidestep that system.

The UAP won just one Senate seat at the 2022 election, despite Palmer spending \$123 million on its campaign. He voluntarily de-registered the UAP, allegedly to avoid financial reporting requirements. The High Court upheld an Electoral Act provision barring re-registration after re-registration in a single three-year election cycle.

Palmer’s latest electoral enterprise, ToP, has a tortured history. It attempted to register as a political party in 2021 but failed the AEC’s 1,500 membership test. ToP then merged with a registered party, the Australian Federation Party, to unsuccessfully contest the 2022 elections.

The Australian Federation Party, in turn, was originally founded as the Country Alliance in 2004. It renamed itself the Australian Country Party in 2015, before adopting the Australian Federation Party title in 2020. Last August, it

applied to the AEC to change its name again to the Trumpet of Patriots, and the AEC approved that change on 3 December 2024.

Palmer's contorted achievement of registered party status stands in stark contrast to the AEC's decision, just announced this month, to deny registration to the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). That refusal came despite the SEP meeting all the requirements, including submitting more than 1,500 names and details of party electoral members.

The AEC decision serves to obstruct the fight for a genuine socialist and revolutionary perspective against Trump-style authoritarianism and its agenda of mass sackings and deportations, social devastation, genocide in Palestine and war against China.

By taking over ToP, Palmer succeeded in attracting attention in the corporate media, including in the US. *Forbes* magazine reported: “An Australian billionaire who launched a rebranded political party ‘heavily inspired’ by President Donald Trump claimed 10,000 people signed up to join his ‘Trumpet of Patriots’ party on its first day in support of proposals including government spending cuts and federally recognizing only two genders.”

Forbes, a big business outlet, reported favourably that Palmer also promised to “drain the swamp” in the capital city of Canberra and praised Trump for being “very effective in reducing public expenditure.”

Palmer has been seeking a wider far-right amalgamation. He told the media he had merger talks with Senator Pauline Hanson and her anti-immigrant One Nation party, which holds two Senate seats, but claimed that Hanson had insisted on becoming the new movement’s “president for life.”

Palmer's contempt for workers was made absolutely clear when he acquired the nickel smelter in the northern Queensland regional city of Townsville in 2009. After initially handing out cars and other productivity bonuses, his Queensland Nickel company went into liquidation in 2016, leaving 800 workers owed more than \$70 million in wages and entitlements.

Reactionary political formations such as Palmer's can posture as defenders of ordinary people only as a result of the betrayals carried out by the Labor Party and the trade union apparatuses which have enforced declining working and living conditions since the Hawke-Keating Labor governments of the 1980s and 1990s, an assault that has deepened under the Albanese government.

Palmer is not the only billionaire pursuing a Trump-style realignment. Among the others leading the push in Australia is Gina Rinehart, the country's richest individual, whose personal fortune, based on iron extraction, now exceeds \$50 billion.

Rinehart participated in Trump's Mar-a-Lago election victory celebrations, along with another prominent Australian billionaire, cardboard packaging baron Anthony Pratt (worth \$17.4 billion), and joined Trump at his presidential inauguration in Washington.

Forbes “exclusive” interview, published on February 20, Rinehart hailed Trump and Argentine President Javier Milei for “rolling out sound policies and offering to significantly cut government red tape, regulations and taxes to attract investment.” She added: “President Trump says it simply, ‘Make America Great Again’; that’s what we need here, to ‘Make Australia Great.’”

Rinehart has bankrolled a right-wing thinktank, the Institute of Public Affairs, which advocates a similar program, but she has not so far publicly supported or donated to any party except the Liberals or Nationals.

Another sign of the discussion in ruling circles was provided last December when the *Australian Financial Review* featured an opinion article by its economics editor John Kehoe, headlined, “Australia needs a dose of Javier Milei’s Argentine capitalism.”

The article mirrored widespread commentary in media outlets internationally lionising Milei’s “free market” economic and social “shock therapy” and police-state repression of the mass opposition to it as a “success” to be matched.

Milei, like Trump and Musk, is demolishing public education, healthcare, regulatory bodies, workers' rights and public institutions, spearheading a war against the working class.

The *World Socialist Web Site* explained in its analysis of the US election result that Trump's ascension signifies a violent realignment of the political superstructure with the reality of social relations, in which a tiny financial oligarchy dominates every aspect.

That is a dramatic change in the political forms of rule by the capitalist class, not just in the US but globally, including in Australia.

The SEP is the only party fighting for the necessary socialist alternative—to unify the working class globally to overturn capitalist rule, establish workers' governments and totally reorganise economic life on the basis of human need, not the insatiable profit appetites of the super-rich.



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