May Day 2026

The role of Australian imperialism in the war on Iran and China

Cheryl Crisp
15 May 2026

This speech was delivered by Cheryl Crisp, Socialist Equality Party (Australia) national secretary, at the 2026 May Day Online Rally, organized by the WSWS and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

This May Day 2026, on behalf of the Socialist Equality Party in Australia, I extend our revolutionary greetings to all workers and young people internationally.

The war against Iran is a turning point in world politics. That is demonstrated by the fact that all of the imperialist powers are involved, including Australia, which was once presented as far away and distant from global geopolitical developments.

The Trump administration is determined to use whatever means necessary to overcome American imperialism's declining hegemony by subjugating or, if need be, eradicating the countries and forces that stand in its way. What it has been unable to achieve through economic strength, it attempts to achieve through military force. The wars prosecuted against Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Gaza and Iran have been aimed at securing control of oil supplies. But the target is ultimately China, which the US views as its main economic and strategic rival.

The Australian Labor government has been among the most rapid and explicit supporters of the strikes on Iran. Australian facilities such as Pine Gap and other joint bases integrated into the US war machine have provided targeting and intelligence for bombs and missiles raining down on the people of Iran.

Labor's support for the war underway is inseparable from its backing for US militarism globally, above all against China. It is lining up the Australian landmass and its population with plans for full-scale war by America against China, which would spell nuclear catastrophe. This is being carried out under conditions where almost 70 percent of the population opposes Israel's annihilation of Gaza and 72 percent oppose the war against Iran. That only highlights the gulf between the program of the government and the working class.

The opposition to war extends to the other war—the one being waged by the Labor government on behalf of the capitalist class against the working class. Labor has increased annual military spending since 2022 from $48 billion to $60 billion. In April, it announced another $53 billion for the next decade. The AUKUS nuclear submarine program will cost $368 billion over 30 years. How is this massive increase in war to be paid for? The government has answered this question in the lead up to the May budget.

It announced the greatest cut to a government program ever. A total of $35 billion is to be gouged from the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which supports and treats disabled people. This is only the start of the cuts, with 160,000 people to be thrown off the scheme and 16 percent of payments to others to be slashed. This will result in misery, destitution, homelessness and premature deaths. And this is just one program. All social programs will be cut in the budget to be brought down in a few weeks. The full brunt of the capitalist crisis will be placed onto the working class, amid a surge in the cost of living.

With warnings of a recession looming, the real level of unemployment is already 10.5 percent, with underemployment at 10.4 percent. That means 20 percent of the population cannot find work or aren't given enough hours to get by.

© World Socialist Web Site

The social crisis is fuelling a political crisis. For the first time in history, the two parties of the Australian capitalist class are disintegrating. In the 2025 federal election, the Liberal Party received its lowest vote since it was formed in 1944. Labor, however, was not the beneficiary, returning to office with its second-lowest winning vote since 1901. Amid the collapse of the Liberals, sections of the ruling elite are turning to the far-right anti-immigrant One Nation Party. It is substantially funded by Gina Rinehart, Australia's richest individual and a MAGA supporter. That is a warning of preparations for dictatorial and authoritarian measures.

But already, such measures are being carried out by Labor. It has passed legislation to illegalise political organisations for supposed "hate speech" and is overseeing a drive to ban protests and such slogans as "globalise the intifada" and "from the river to the sea." This has nothing to do with combatting antisemitism, but is about repressing popular opposition in preparation for war.

The working class has a long history of opposition to war, from the defeat of two conscription referenda in World War I to opposition to the wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Gaza. Every week, there have been protests against the Gaza genocide, with hundreds of thousands participating over the last two years. The lesson is that protest alone, appealing to the very governments carrying out the war crimes, is a futile and bankrupt perspective. It must be the working class that is mobilised in rank-and-file committees independent of the corporatised trade unions that are aligned with the pro-war Labor government and big business. These committees would unite workers and organise opposition to war and attacks on workers' rights and conditions.

We are seeing the collapse not just of a country but of an entire system. It is up to the working class, armed with a revolutionary perspective, to put an end to that system, halt the descent into barbarism and ensure the socialist future of humanity.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site