

Australia's far-right One Nation announces plan for massive assault on immigrants

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On Monday, the far-right One Nation party unveiled a plan for a massive assault on immigrants that would inevitably involve police-state measures, including dragnets and raids modelled on those being implemented by the Trump administration's ICE agency.

One Nation has always been based on frothing anti-immigrant xenophobia. The mass deportation plan, however, has greater significance than its previous rhetoric given its political rise.

Under conditions of a crisis of the two-party set-up, One Nation's polling has soared over the past year, consistently eclipsing the opposition Liberal-National Coalition and at times the Labor government. The prospect of One Nation forming a government at some point, either in its own right or through a coalition, is a real one.

One Nation declared that it would slash the number of temporary migrants in the country by 750,000 over three years. It would target international students as well as the family members of migrants who have been granted visas as skilled workers.

The far-right party also repeated unsubstantiated assertions that there are 80,000 "illegal" migrants in the country whose visas have expired and declared that they would be deported.

The response of the major parties, Labor and the Coalition, as well as the corporate media, is a marker of the extent to which vicious attacks on immigrants have been normalised by the political establishment.

None of them have made an issue of the tremendous assault on democratic rights that One Nation's crackdown would entail, or its politically reactionary purpose of demonising "foreigners" and blaming them for all social ills.

Instead, the official response has centred exclusively on the impact that the measures would have on the economy and the operations of big business.

Echoing the line taken by the financial press, Labor's immigration minister Tony Burke warned that One Nation's plan would "smash the Australian economy." He stated that it would result in labour shortages in low-paid agricultural work, as well as in sectors such as aged care.

That is true, but it only underscores the fraud of Labor's own attempts to scapegoat immigrants for a social crisis caused by its own pro-business policies. One Nation has unveiled its plan

under conditions where the major parties are competing with it over who is "tougher" on the question of immigration.

Labor has dramatically reduced the annual intake of international students, while escalating its assault on refugees, including by consigning them to miserable conditions in camps in the Pacific Islands.

In August, Burke had been due to make a major announcement on immigration policy at the National Press Club. Coverage indicated a substantial overlap with the policy now unveiled by One Nation, including a sweeping reduction in temporary migrant numbers through caps on the number of backpackers, more stringent family visa rules and an even greater reduction of the appeal rights of asylum seekers.

The announcement was scuttled just days before it was due to be delivered. Reporting at the time indicated that the executive of the government, including Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, had objected that the measures did not go far enough and that purported "loopholes" needed to be closed. There have since been reports of concerns within the Labor cabinet of the economic consequences of the measures Burke had been due to announce, i.e., the very same objection he has raised to One Nation's policy.

Whatever the exact circumstances of the backroom discussions, they underscore the fact that One Nation's anti-immigrant xenophobia is one expression of a broader lurch to the right by the entire political establishment.

For its part, the Coalition has made immigration announcements almost identical to those of One Nation. In his response to Labor's May budget, Liberal leader Angus Taylor declared that a Coalition government would carry out "one of the largest cuts to immigration in Australian history," including through Trumpian mass deportations.

The extent to which anti-immigrant chauvinism is being deliberately brought to the centre of political life, to divert mass anger over the social and cost-of-living crisis, was underscored by an *Australian Financial Review* (AFR) editorial this morning. It adopted a somewhat schizophrenic line.

While pointing to the negative economic consequences of a massive assault on immigrants, the AFR favourably noted the similarities between One Nation's policy and that being implemented by the Canadian government, declaring: "One

Nation's copying of Carney's approach suggests that the once-fringe party's proposals aren't necessarily extreme and that some recalibration of migration settings is a mainstream issue." The AFR encouraged Labor to regain control of the discussion on immigration, through a further crackdown.

That was one expression of growing fears expressed by the political and media establishment, over the destabilising consequences of One Nation's rise. One Nation has been heavily promoted by the establishment, including through vast coverage, to shift official politics further to the right and to divert social anger in reactionary channels.

But there are fears that the ascendancy of One Nation could be a death knell for a two-party system that is already in an advanced state of crisis. The Coalition was wiped out at the May 2025 federal election, reflecting the collapse of its erstwhile middle class base after decades of social polarisation. Labor has lost any stable mass base of support within the working class, after having served as the open spearhead of a corporate offensive on jobs, wages and conditions.

While elements of the ruling elite have identified themselves with One Nation, most notably Australia's wealthiest individual the mining baron Gina Rinehart, others do not view it as a viable instrument of government. Its phony populist pitch could unleash forces that it cannot control, and its rabid xenophobia could obstruct Australian imperialist foreign policy.

Those concerns have found expression in what increasingly has the character of an official, manufactured campaign to undermine One Nation.

It began earlier this month, with Murdoch's national flagship publishing lurid allegations that One Nation's Victorian leader Warren Pickering had a history of drug use and other problematic behaviour.

Then, a One Nation cartoon describing prominent Liberal MP Andrew Hastie as a "traitor" became a focal point of upset across much of the political and media establishment. It had largely gone unremarked when it was published in late July.

Hastie, a former special forces soldier, has been targeted for giving evidence against Ben Roberts-Smith in earlier civil proceedings. The defence of Roberts-Smith, a hulking special forces veteran now charged with five war crimes allegedly committed during the neo-colonial occupation of Afghanistan, has become a cause célèbre among layers of the far-right, including One Nation.

Not only the Coalition, but Labor too, have presented Hastie as a wounded party, while he has pledged to be unyielding in combatting One Nation. Hastie is an unlikely champion of the fight against the far-right, given that he is a far-right figure himself, who has advanced calls for the Coalition to revive its fortunes through a Trumpian pitch to an "Australia First" agenda, including through an assault on immigrants and the promotion of supposedly national values.

Hastie has acknowledged that his own seat may be under

threat from One Nation at the next federal election.

The campaign reached an even more farcical level over recent days, with comments made by One Nation leader Pauline Hanson in February dredged up. Hanson had made offensive remarks about Albanese's mother, who lived in public housing for many decades. Albanese, a lifelong career politician who has faithfully served the interests of big business for decades, routinely trots out the story of his "battler" mother to try and win some public support.

As with the depiction of Hastie as a crusader against One Nation, Albanese's offence at Hanson's attack on public housing residents is an utter fraud. Labor is completing the destruction of public housing and has governed openly in the interests of the property developers while blaming immigrants for the housing crisis.

Amid the crisis of the two-party system and state elections looming in Victoria and New South Wales, there is all sorts of jockeying across the political establishment, including factional conflicts and tensions within Labor and the Coalition. The confected united front forged by Labor and the Coalition against One Nation, however, has a more than conjunctural issue.

In the first instance, the campaign centres on absurd issues, because the major parties are incapable of differentiating from One Nation's xenophobia, nationalism, militarism or pro-business policies, all of which they share.

Secondly, the campaign underscores the crucial importance of the two-party system to the Australian bourgeoisie, in imposing its agenda and suppressing opposition. In a radio interview at the beginning of the year, Albanese lamented the disarray of the Liberal Party, his government's nominal opposition, and the rise of One Nation, declaring "I'm a believer in mainstream politics and that the parties of government, it's important. [It has] served this country pretty well."

One Nation has been able to make a reactionary pitch to widespread social discontent, under conditions where Labor has carried out an offensive against the working class and has created an atmosphere of nationalist reaction, including attacks on immigrants, that has aided the far-right party.

The crisis of the two-party system, however, and the mass discontent, will increasingly find expression in an upsurge of the class struggle and a growing hostility to capitalism. The critical issue, in combatting the program of war and austerity, supported by all of the official parties, and the threat posed by the far-right, is transforming that developing movement into a conscious fight for socialism.



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