

Alliance Voices

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Special issue: The Socialist Alliance Policy Dossier

This dossier contains the complete set of policies and policy drafts that have been adopted or are under discussion within the Socialist Alliance. It includes:

- All policies and policy statements adopted by the Alliance's two National Conferences (2001 and 2003);
- All policies and policy statements adopted by the Alliance National Executive;
- Various policies adopted at a state and territory level;
- Policy drafts that are under discussion, and;
- Individual Socialist Alliance members' contributions on policy.

The status of each text is indicated after its title. Socialist Alliance resolutions covering our policy toward particular events, that is, applications of our policy to concrete cases, are not included in this dossier.

See the end of this section for Socialist Alliance resolutions covering the process of developing policy.

NB. At its 20 February 2004 hook-up the National Elections Working Group decided to make a priority of producing updated draft policy in the following areas for the May National Conference: health, education, international, refugees, democratic rights, workers rights and welfare. These updated drafts will be appear in a forthcoming Alliance Voices.

From the National Elections Working Group

1. The Socialist Alliance platform

Status: As adopted by the 2001 National Conference and amended by the 2003 National Conference.

The Socialist Alliance stands on a platform of total opposition to the profit-driven economic rationalist agenda of social austerity, privatisation and deregulation. By empowering communities and redistributing the wealth of society we can create jobs, expand public services, and improve welfare and services.

Millions of us face declining services, transport chaos, low pay, job insecurity, homelessness, racism, sexism and environmental destruction, while the tremendous wealth of Australia is concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority. Only by ending the concentration of power in the hands of that minority can the wealth that exists be used for the benefit of working people. Every major industry should be re-organised on the lines of social provision for need—publicly owned, and democratically controlled by the workers and the community.

The Socialist Alliance will stand candidates in the next federal election to give a voice to working-class struggle and highlight the need for working-class political representation. We will stand to offer an alternative that Labor is not. We recognise that on issues such as the GST, health and education, Labor is offering far less than what traditional Labor voters want. The Socialist Alliance stands in complete opposition to the racist and right-wing Pauline Hanson's One Nation party.

If elected, a Socialist Alliance candidate would reject the perks and personal pay-outs of parliamentary office and accept only the average worker's wage. In parliament, Socialist Alliance candidates would use their position to give a voice to workers' struggles and social movements, fight reactionary policies and promote the mass campaigns that can defeat the attacks on jobs and living standards.

A movement for change must be built by developing policies, campaigns, industrial struggles and co-operation with all workers, environmental, anti-racist, and other social movements and to put forward an alternative to corporate control of society.

A sustained mass campaign of total opposition to the ruling class offensive can bring together the forces to replace capitalism with a socialist society, based on co-operation, democracy and ecological sustainability.

SCRAP THE GST, TAX THE RICH

- Tax the rich and slash the defence budget to fund free universal provision for health, education, and care of children, the aged and people with disabilities.
- Free tertiary education; cancel the HECS debt.
- Free quality childcare.
- Repeal the GST and introduce a highly progressive system of taxes on incomes, profits and wealth of the rich; reverse drastic reductions in business taxation of recent years.
- Free quality aged care.
- Increase social security benefits to a living wage; no work for the dole; no mutual obligation.

PUBLIC NEED NOT CORPORATE GREED

- End government funding of private schools, hospitals and health insurance.
- Fund Medicare not private health funds.
- Expand public services.
- No to privatisation, keep Telstra and Centrelink under public ownership; reverse the privatisation of Qantas, the Commonwealth Bank, airports, electricity and the CES.

FULL UNION RIGHTS

- Every worker should have the right to join a union and oblige their employer to recognise and negotiate with the union. Unions should have the right to gain access to workplaces, to inspect company plans and books, to strike, to picket effectively, and to act in solidarity with other unions or social causes.
- Repeal anti-union laws—the Workplace Relations Act and sections 45 D and E of the Trade Practices Act.
- No individual contracts.
- Stop the attacks on workers' compensation, increase the entitlements for injured workers.

FIGHT CORPORATE GLOBALISATION

- For international solidarity, to gain union rights, basic public services, and a living wage for workers around the world.
- Cancel Third World debt. Withdraw Australia from the WTO. The agents of global capitalism, the WTO, IMF and World Bank must be replaced with a global plan of economic reconstruction to end poverty.
- Promote peace and international co-operation.
- Open the borders.

FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

- For a democratic republic with representatives receiving no more than a skilled worker's wage.
- End racist harassment of Aborigines and ethnic groups.
- Disarm the police to stop police killings.

- Decriminalise personal drug use; for safe injecting rooms and prescription heroin trials.

FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION

- Full reproductive freedom. Repeal abortion laws; guarantee access to abortion services; lift the ban on RU 486 (mifepristone, the abortion pill). End legalised discrimination against lesbians and single women seeking access to medically assisted conception.
- Fully funded refuges for women and children escaping physical, psychological or sexual abuse.
- No cuts to women's services.
- Equal pay for comparable work; affirmative action to ensure access to non-traditional jobs.
- Free abortion on demand; a woman's right to choose.

END DISCRIMINATION

- Repeal all laws that discriminate against lesbians and gay men; full equality for same sex couples.
- End all discrimination based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, age, disability, political ideology, employment status, sexuality and gender identity.
- Equal pay for equal or comparative work for women, young people, Indigenous workers and people with disabilities.

FOR ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Extend and socialise public transport, not freeways.
- Effective action on greenhouse gas emissions; develop renewable energy sources;
- No uranium mining, no reactor; no logging old growth forests; no genetically modified organism (GMO) crops or field trials.
- Worker-community-green alliances to counter profiteering developers.
- Fund public housing.

SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

- Repeal Howard's ten-point plan and extend native title; restore the right to veto mining on Indigenous land.
- Negotiate a treaty recognising prior ownership and Indigenous land rights.
- Increase funding for, and Indigenous control of, community services.
- Abolish mandatory sentencing.
- Apology and full compensation for the stolen generations.

FREE THE REFUGEES, MIGRANT RIGHTS

- Close the detention centres; end mandatory detention.
- Full rights for asylum seekers and migrants; abolish the two-year waiting period which prevent newly arrived migrants accessing social security.
- End all deportations.
- Remove all restrictive and discriminatory immigration regulations; abolish the pro-business "points" system.
- Funding and specialist services for resettlement.
- Unlimited and free English classes.
- Full citizenship rights including the right to vote for all refugees and migrants, with abolition of the temporary protection visa.

SOLIDARITY WITH WORKING CLASS AND DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLES IN ALL COUNTRIES

- Opposition to Australia's imperialist foreign policy, and the export of military hardware, personnel and training.
- Solidarity with Indonesia's peoples, not its military and police.
- End ANZUS, no to APEC, for a nuclear-free Pacific.
- Close Pine Gap, no to the Star Wars/missile defence shield project.
- Solidarity with struggles against repressive regimes and reactionary forces.
- For the right of oppressed nations to self-determination.

JOBS NOT PROFITS

- Shorter working week with no loss in pay; nationalise under workers' and community control companies that threaten mass sackings.
- Guarantee workers' entitlements.
- Stop casualisation; for full employment with permanent jobs.
- Stop national competition policy massacring jobs.
- For industry-wide agreements; no trading-off of jobs and conditions.
- All workers to have access to an award.

2. Policy and policy proposals on specific areas

Preamble to the Socialist Alliance platform

Status: Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

Socialist Alliance aims to provide an answer to the millions of working people seeking a world free of war, poverty, bigotry, and environmental destruction. War and misery are the defining characteristics of capitalism.

The current invasion of Iraq by imperialist forces, including Australian troops, means not only mass murder in the Middle East, but increasing attacks on the wages, services and living conditions of working people in this country. The Socialist Alliance is opposed to the war on Iraq and stands with the Iraqi people against the occupying force which seeks to rob them of their sovereignty and resources. In order to afford their war, Australia's millionaires and their political allies intend to make the working majority pay for a conflict with which we profoundly disagree.

The tremendous wealth created by our collective labour should not be squandered by the tiny ruling minority. The redistribution of their undeserved gains would go a long way to alleviating the crises in health, welfare, education and housing that plague our society.

The reorganisation of industries to permit worker and community control and the reversal of privatisation would create tens of thousands of jobs. Real democracy would unleash the collective creativity of working people, so necessary to repair the damage to our communities and environments caused by decades of economic rationalism and the ruthless pursuit of profits.

Injustice and capitalism are inextricably linked.

Nationalism, sexism, racism and homophobia are the preferred tools of the ruling class, used to divide working people from each other and so divert us from our common struggle against exploitation. The Socialist Alliance is totally opposed to all forms of bigotry and will challenge it wherever it appears. For this reason, the Alliance stands with Indigenous people in their centuries-long struggle to reclaim their land, and with all those fleeing persecution and poverty to seek a better life in this country.

The Socialist Alliance seeks to stand candidates in elections at every level of government. We intend to offer an alternative to both Labor and the Greens. Having embraced the policies of corporate globalisation, Labor has long ceased offering traditional Labor voters an alternative to the reactionary program of the Howard regime. And while the Greens go a long way in pointing out the injustices and depredations of the current system, ultimately they seek to reform it, rather than build a better alternative.

To Greens voters the Alliance says that real change is not possible without removing the source of environmental degradation—the profit system itself.

Sustainability means socialism.

If elected, a Socialist Alliance candidate would reject the perks and personal pay-outs of parliamentary office and accept only the average worker's wage. In parliament, Socialist Alliance candidates would use their position to give a voice to workers' struggles and social movements, fight reactionary policies and promote the mass campaigns that can defeat the attacks on jobs and living standards.

Ultimately, parliament is not the forum for lasting social change. For that reason the Socialist Alliance also seeks to build united front action to the greatest extent possible, in order to promote the only viable future for the planet and its people—a worldwide socialist society.

A. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

INDIGENOUS SELF-DETERMINATION

Status: Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

The territory of Australia was invaded by the British in 1788. Since then, European authorities have staged a genocidal campaign against the Indigenous Nations of this continent. Socialist Alliance notes that none of the land stolen from its original owners was ever ceded and considers that there can be no justice in Australia without a just settlement for Indigenous people.

Socialist Alliance unconditionally recognises the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations and acknowledges the racist repression that continues to destroy their communities and denies them basic services.

- Recognise Indigenous Nations.
- Compensate the Stolen Generations.
- Repeal the Native Title Act and abolish all racist land laws.
- Stop racist sentencing, free all Indigenous prisoners.
- Immediate implementation of the recommendations of the 1987 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.
- Access to services for all Indigenous communities equivalent to all other Australians.
- End genocide by neglect-full health care for Indigenous peoples.

- Defend and extend Indigenous programming on the ABC, SBS and community broadcasters; an end to the vicious and destructive portrayal of Indigenous people in some sections of the media.
- Full access to all land, waterways and seas for all traditional purposes.
- Indigenous control of all Indigenous affairs.

B. Agriculture and the Countryside

SOME THOUGHTS TOWARDS A RURAL POLICY FOR THE SOCIALIST ALLIANCE IN THE NSW 2003 STATE ELECTIONS.

Status: Initiated by Lynn Smith/Canterbury-Bankstown branch. In collaboration with Sue Bolton and Liz MacNamara.

PREAMBLE

The Socialist Alliance should have a rural policy that benefits both rural workers and small farmers, small shopkeepers, sub-contractors etc.

Politically

Workers and the petit bourgeois have a common enemy: big farmers and big business. Big business exploits workers and is out to bankrupt small business people e.g. small farmers, small shopkeepers, contractors, small-scale fishermen, owner/drivers, self-employed tradespeople. Small businesses people are under constant pressure to either go into hock to the banks or get bigger, or sell out to large enterprises, or go bust. Struggles by workers against big business (and the state forces the capitalist class uses to try and crush these struggles) can be more effective if petit bourgeois elements are won over to the workers' side.

Examples:

- In the Mount Isa miners' strike during the late 1800s police were brought in from Brisbane to protect scabs. When policemen went to the local shops to buy food, the shopkeepers refused to sell to them;
- During the MUA lockout on the docks in '98, both the meatworkers union (AMIEU) and the Maritime Union of Australia were approached by members of the Union of Farmers who said they "opposed the bully boy tactics of the National Farmers Federation" (the group of mainly wealthy farmers which employed scabs to do wharfies' jobs during the lockout);
- A group of East Gippsland dairy farmers organised a barbecue for the picketing waterfront workers at the Melbourne docks during the above dispute.

If the working class does not succeed in winning a significant number of small business people to its side in times of relative class peace (such as we are experiencing now), when a crisis erupts we will have left the way clear for the capitalist class to organise demoralised petit bourgeois and lumpen elements into fascist gangs. All you have to do is look at Germany in the 1930s, the New Guard in Australia in the 1930s and Chile in 1972-73 so see what can happen.

Class fluidity in country areas is greater than that in large cities. People who are wage workers and members of trade unions right now could well be self employed next month, then become wage workers again next year. When factories, steel mills, mines, railway yards, docks, canning works etc. close down, workers have to find other ways to survive. So they become sub-contractors, or taxi drivers or buy a milk run or a corner store until something better turns up. One of the main reasons why the ALP gained the impetus to move outside the cities and become a nation-wide party in the late 1800s is because of the support of the Australian Workers Union. Many of the militant members of the AWU were shearers. And what did many shearers do when the season was over? Go back to their small farms. They did not earn enough from their properties to support their families right through the year, so they became part-time unionists.

Organisationally

At the recent NSW state conf. of the Socialist we were informed that the Socialist Alliance currently has 160 members in NSW who live in areas away from branches.

These members (who are in their ones and twos) can hardly be expected to produce leaflets and campaign on local issues, especially if we do not have an SA candidate standing for the lower house in their electorate.

If we had a rural policy that applied to all country areas in NSW and produced material centrally on this, at least we would be giving our more isolated members something relevant to campaign around in regard to our upper house candidates.

SOME POLICY THOUGHT STARTERS

1. Food production, packaging, manufacture and distribution

Small farmers need a living income. Workers in the city and the country need clean, nutritious, tasty foods at affordable prices. At the moment small farmers, trucking companies, food packing and processing companies and consumers are being dictated to by the large supermarket chains e.g. Woolworths, Coles-Myer etc. Small farmers are forced to sell under the cost of production. Owner/drivers who transport produce to market barely make a living. Working class families find they have to pay more every time they wheel a trolley of food to the supermarket checkout. Yet the dominant supermarket chains are raking in massive profits.

We say:

- Nationalise the large supermarket chains and place them under the control of small farmers, supermarket workers and consumers;

- Re-regulate milk production and distribution. Re-establish milk co-ops on a democratic basis i.e. one member, one vote (rather than on the amount of land owned) and only farmers who work the land be allowed as members;
- Take the various primary production marketing boards out of private hands and place them under the control of producers' and workers' committees;
- Introduce a guaranteed minimum income for small farmers

2. Banking and finance

Australia's banks are now all privately owned. In the name of making fabulous profits for their shareholders, banks are closing branches in smaller towns, foreclosing on small farmers in difficulty and sacking bank workers in the thousands. These banks always favour big business when it comes to lending money for upgrading services. We say:

- Nationalise the major banks and finance companies and place them under the control of committees of workers, customers and small business people;
- Open bank branches in every community that needs one;
- Defend the jobs of bank workers;
- Provide low interest, long term loans to small farmers and small business people to help them buy equipment that will improve productivity.

3. Other policy ideas for rural areas which need to be worked up

- Extend and upgrade public transport, especially country rail links. Low freight rates for bulk agricultural produce, stock feed, farm equipment etc;
- Prevent the privatisation of utilities e.g. electricity, gas, water;
- Phase out farming on environmentally fragile land and national parks. Set up a rural relocation scheme that assists small farmers to move to more productive rural areas or to the city, without a reduction in living standards;
- Improve and expand recreational, health and support services for young people in country areas, especially gay, lesbian and indigenous young people;
- Renationalise Telstra, nationalise Optus and Vodaphone and place these phone giants under the control of workers' and consumers' committees;
- Protect small business from rapacious landlords e.g. via long term fixed rentals;
- Long term casual workers to enjoy the same conditions as full time workers e.g. to be paid sick pay, holiday pay, long service leave etc;
- Encourage more workers to be union delegates by giving them paid time off work to travel around and organise in their areas;
- Expand the public housing sector;
- Retrain for real jobs on full pay those workers made redundant e.g. timber workers, fishing workers etc.

These are thought starters. We welcome any and all contributions to a discussion which will produce a more comprehensive list of policies for workers, small farmers and small business people in the country.

C. Democratic Rights and Civil Liberties

Text 1

DEFEND CIVIL LIBERTIES AND DEMOCRACY.

Status: *Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).*

The terrorist attacks in New York, Washington and Bali have provided the ruling class with an alibi for a full frontal attack on the few rights available to Australian workers. Socialist Alliance will campaign to repeal all anti-democratic laws and to enact legislation providing guarantees of basic liberties.

- Repeal all "anti-terror" laws.
- Abolish ASIO and all secret police forces.
- Keep the troops in the barracks-no military involvement in civil policing.
- Abolish the monarchy-for a democratic republic.
- For a bill of rights to protect basic liberties.
- Repeal electoral laws designed to make it harder for minor parties to gain registration.
- Instant recall of parliamentarians.
- Full proportional representation and quotas for oppressed groups.

Text 2

BUILD UNITED FRONTS TO STOP THE RIGHT WING AND FASCISM

Status: *Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).*

The economic crisis of capitalism emboldens the right-wing and fascist organisations. They seek to recruit followers to their ideology by appealing to those who are hurting. They peddle populist solutions, which scapegoat immigrants, single mothers, Indigenous people, a independent women, Jews, Muslims or queers in order to distract from the real causes of people's problems.

Socialist Alliance is committed to build democratic united front actions and mobilising union action to stop the growth of right-wing and fascist organisations.

- When running in elections, Socialist Alliance puts right-wing and fascist candidates last.
- No reliance on the police to defend us from fascism.
- For organised and disciplined mass actions both to defend targets of the right and to confront and prevent the growth of right-wing organisations.
- For ongoing educational campaigns to expose the ultra right agenda of organisations such as the Citizens Electoral Council, One Nation, the Blackshirts, National Action and other reactionaries.
- Solidarity in action against the right-an injury to one is an injury to all!

Text 3

END THE CRIMINALISATION OF WORKING PEOPLE AND THE POOR

Status: Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

The moral panic concerning an alleged constant increase in crime is used by governments for one reason -to control the working class by defining us as criminals. In particular Indigenous people, young people and people from certain ethnic backgrounds are singled out and scapegoated. This diverts attention from the real causes of crime: the health effects of substance abuse and the brutalisation of many parts of the working class through poverty and the destruction of basic services.

Once caught up in the so-called "justice" system, people are further brutalised, alienated and subjected to constant abuse and violence. Socialist Alliance recognises that the overwhelming majority of crime victims are working people, but considers that the only meaningful purpose of a prison system is rehabilitation and education of those involved in criminal behaviour. A system based on punishment leads only to further anti-social activity, and prison should only be used for those who commit violent crimes against people.

- The end of police brutality and racist harassment: disarm the police Establish elected, community-controlled, police review boards with the power to discipline and fire cops who brutalise, harass and murder Indigenous people, immigrants, women, queers, youth and workers. The police are the armed agents of the ruling class and are incapable of policing themselves.
- Democratic rights for prisoners: expanded funding for legal aid to provide free, quality legal representation to all who need it. Stop racism and sexism in sentencing.
- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against prisoners and ex-prisoners. The right of prisoners to organise on their own behalf without retaliation. Quality health care and decent living conditions in prison. Full access to job training and education while in prison. An end to the use of prisoners as super-exploited labour. Pay prisoners full award wages for their work. The right of prisoners to retain custody of their children. Adequate facilities for children to stay with parents. The right of prisoners to unmonitored and unlimited visits from friends, relatives and partners, regardless of sexual orientation or marital status. The right of prisoners to be housed close to their communities. Transgendered inmates to be housed in prisons appropriate to their chosen gender. An end to sexual harassment of all prisoners. Stop strip searches and prison rapes.
- Immediate and unconditional legalisation of prostitution: sex workers must not be subject to any form of legal harassment, fines or prosecution Integration of prostitutes into the working class, with basic labour safeguards and the right to unionise. End the causes of prostitution: poverty, racism and sexism.
- Provide education and training programs for those who choose to leave the sex industry.
- Legalise all drugs under community control, to take away drug dealers' profits, lower the cost and, therefore, reduce crimes committed to finance drug habits.
- Regulate drug quality. Provide needle exchange programs, safe injecting facilities and free, quality, voluntary treatment programs for addicts and alcoholics.
- Establish universal, culturally sensitive education programs to help prevent drug addiction. No forced drug testing.
- Equalise age of consent for heterosexual and homosexual acts; remove all references to homosexuality 23 in the Criminal Codes; remove all references to abortion from Criminal Codes; repeal Summary Offences laws which allow police to entrap gays and sex workers and to harass young people and the homeless. Abolish all vagrancy and similar laws which criminalise poverty.

D. People with disabilities (and disability access)

NO DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Status: Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

The major causes of disability are directly linked to capitalism-war, poverty, unsafe working conditions and a failing health system. Disabled people are scapegoated, stereotyped and forced into low-paid work, if they can get employment in the face of institutionalised discrimination. Many disabled people are forced to work for free, or in exchange for housing and food. This is barbaric. Under the slogan of “de-institutionalisation,” governments have closed down many facilities for people with both physical and psychological disabilities. This was not done to integrate people into society. It was done to cut costs, in accordance with neo-liberal economic dogma. Most people removed from health facilities have little support and live in extreme poverty, except where family or friends have taken over State responsibilities.

This, again, is privatisation by stealth. The few remaining programs tend to reinforce dependency rather than encourage self-sufficiency. This dependency is then reinforced through totally inadequate income support from government.

- Complete integration of people with disabilities into society, including full legal rights and protection from discrimination. Full funding of all medical and state-of-the-art technological aids for people with disabilities.
- Conversion of all public transport, public buildings and all government facilities to make them accessible to people with disabilities. Free access to transport, sporting, cultural and other events for people with disabilities and their carers/aides.
- Equal pay for disabled workers; fully accessible workplaces and access to non-discriminatory education and training. Full availability of integration aides at all levels of education. A living wage for all disability pensioners.
- An end to the stereotyping and discrimination against people with disabilities which emphasises disability and ignores ability.

E. Economy and Full Employment

Text 1

TAX THE RICH

Status: *Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).*

The taxation system is actually a system of corporate welfare, providing wealthy individuals and corporations with unlimited options to avoid paying any tax at all.

Meanwhile ordinary workers and the poor generally are subject to the onerous burden of PAYE obligations and the GST. The weakness of the tax base is one of the prime excuses for governments to cut services and attack working conditions. Socialist Alliance will campaign to reverse the burden of funding vital services, ensuring that the rich few millionaires cease freeloading on the backs of the millions of us.

- Abolish the GST and replace it with tax surcharges on profits and a steeply graduated, indexed income tax scale, rated at 0 per cent for pensioners, beneficiaries and low-paid workers.
- Abolish land tax for primary residences.
- Abolish tax on State and Local Government Services to individuals.
- Abolish tax on private bank accounts and replace it with a steeply graduated levy on business transactions.
- Impose a steeply graduated tax scale on business, and enforce it.
- Abolish tax concessions for foreign companies-all businesses to be taxed using the same scale.
- End the taxpayer subsidy of business expenses- abolish all business deductions for big corporations.
- Impose a steeply graduated inheritance tax and introduce death and gift duties for the rich.
- Impose a 100 per cent penalty tax on speculative land development to control the price of housing.
- Impose a graduated carbon tax for all businesses, with rebates for the use of renewable energy

Text 2

SOME IDEAS FOR A SOCIALIST ALLIANCE JOBS POLICY

Status: *Submitted by Chris Spindler, Batman Socialist Alliance, to Founding Conference. Submitted for discussion within the Socialist Alliance.*

This policy sketch is an attempt to offer some concrete solutions on employment and start some debate.

Hands up who is for unemployment! If there were a vote tomorrow on eliminating unemployment we would win it. If only it were this easy. It is clear though that working people have nothing to gain from unemployment. Workers, families, their communities are torn apart. It is only the bosses who have anything to gain from unemployment using it to keep wages and conditions down and promote competition between workers. We don't just need to minimise unemployment but develop the policies that will end it.

None of the major political parties currently has any real job solutions. They are essentially free traders who encourage business to hire and fire at will, they accept unemployment and offer laws which allow for the effective sacking of whole workforces. The liberals even want to make access to unfair dismissal laws restricted for small business employees.

Socialist Alliance on the other hand wants to work toward a system that does not endorse unemployment. To get there we need government to implement particular policies now and start to challenge the owners of capital who think that profits can come before people.

Socialist Alliance rejects the idea that higher profits benefits us all—trickle down doesn't work. Higher profits in effect mean less for workers. Our policies would promote the idea that unemployment can be restricted and done away with. Pie in the sky? Read on.

Keep full-time, secure work

These type of policies reverse the trends in industry which see a less secure expendable workforce.

- Place definite limits on the use of casuals, contractors, labour hire and part-time work. Real unemployment is higher than the government figures. Insecurity and insufficient hours is a real burden on working people.
- *Make mandatory company participation in funds that guarantee workers' entitlements in case of bankruptcy or closure (like Manusafe).* (Company after company have gone bust taking workers entitlements with them. Manusafe protects the entitlements of workers making them portable and secure in the face of business closures.)
- *Promote apprenticeship schemes.* End the trend to de-skilling, multi-skilling and removing demarcations, which makes work more unsafe.
- *An immediate freeze on all tariffs.* The dismantling of tariffs has destroyed sections of manufacturing and rural production, governments and employers need to take responsibility for re-training in alternative industries if tariff reductions are going to destroy industry.

Job creation not job destruction

- *Develop job creation programs,* but paid for not out of our strained pockets but by the wealthy.
- *Major infrastructure spending by the government.* In telecommunications, health, education, housing, sustainable energy, even manufacturing. The government should not just tender it out this expenditure but be prepared to be an employer. Where's the money coming from? State governments are to get a windfall from the GST. Rather than invest that money in community projects they have given tax cuts to businesses—once again out of our pockets and into theirs.
- *Impose a Tobin Tax,* that is, a tax on speculation or foreign exchange transactions. The movement of money, the investment in the stock exchanges is big business but it is not productive investment—companies should be forced to invest productively.

Share the work around

- *For a shorter working week with no loss in pay.* We need to share the work around. To cut the working week to 35 hours, or even 30 hours, will create hundreds of thousands of jobs. But for many workers living hand to mouth a cut in hours should not mean a cut in wages. This will mean the shorter hours bill will have to come from company profits. Profits have been up. Banks show record profits. An indication is that executive salaries went up 22 per cent last year. It's time to share the wealth around.
- *Action against companies who threaten mass sackings.* Currently companies can do as they please. They can close a factory with no consequence other than putting tens or hundreds out of work. Arnotts is an example—a productive, profitable factory with a market for its product. No other reason to close down than a multinational decision. There are no penalties on that company, the directors are not held responsible. This should change. And if another buyer can't be found the government should be prepared to buy it *nationalise* it. It can keep running, making a profit, employing 600 workers. Why can't the government be an employer of last resort!
- *Action to retrain and re-employ workers.* There are other examples where factories close because they are unprofitable due to bad management, or being specialized in the wrong sector of the economy. It is the government that is in the position of being able to retrain the workers and/or retool the company for useful production. Take the example of the forestry industry. If society demands that industry change (and it should in this case) then society through government needs to ensure the standard of living of those people and communities.
- *Nationalise it?* There should be no problems with such a concept. So many areas of the economy are socialised when there is a problem. HIH we all pay for, East Timor we pay for. Why not socialise responsibility for jobs and why not socialize some of the massive profits of some companies to help pay for real job promotion?.

Solving the jobs problem in a world of global competition

Subsidies to business to build or make here, protectionism and tariffs, buy Australian and even content policies all have the same idea at heart—to protect “our” jobs against the workers of countries overseas. On a state level we have seen how ridiculous this is with one state bidding against another for company investment. Again, rather than seeing workers in other states or in other countries as competitors they have to be our allies.

Before a company cries poor we need to know what is happening. Companies need to open their books, reveal what their managers get and list any subsidies they already get.

- *Subsidies* (or our taxes being used to prop up profits)? Look at BHP: millions in subsidies under the Steel Plan and then they closed Newcastle and Whyalla.
- *Tariffs and protectionism against overseas imports?* In the first place increasing tariffs doesn't work. In the 1930s tariffs were at their highest ever and still one third of the workforce was unemployed. It's not the workers overseas that should be targeted but those “at home”.
- *The same goes for buy Australian:* this just means don't buy from “overseas”. What about buying from companies that are union or treat their workers better or pay decent wages? The Core Labour standards of the right

to organise, outlawing child labour, head in the right direction but they should be extended to include questions such as wages. In the end the jobs question has to be looked at beyond trying to protect our patch. Lifting the standard of living overseas ensures there is no incentive for companies to go offshore—we need to head in this direction.

How?

- *Reverse the North-South trade relationship.* Stop the exploitation that is occurring in the trade relationship between rich and poor countries. The poor countries are stuck with second rate machinery that can't possibly be as productive as the advanced countries. These countries and their workers are caught in a never-ending poverty cycle and they must be allowed to develop. As well as assisting in development these countries must have the their debt burden cancelled.
- *Create international bargaining.* We need to campaign for common outcomes internationally. Pattern bargaining has shown that common outcomes can occur statewide, even nationally. It also has to happen internationally. The bosses work internationally, their money travels from country to country in search of the greatest profits, so we have to organise internationally to boost the wages and conditions of our fellow workers and to ensure that bosses can't find cheap employment and non-union havens. Such international campaigns can be started in companies with factories in a number of regionally based centres. Many of the car and component companies have bases in a number of Asian countries—a common campaign can be started between all branches. And we can move to expand the ILO Labour Rights (which includes the right of association, the right to organise, no child labour) but it should also include wage rises, working conditions and health and safe work practices.
- *Fund and help the labour movement to organise internationally.* Material and political support for the union movement internationally. The Canadian Auto Workers impose a 1c/hour/worker levy on companies. The union then uses this money to bring delegates from other countries to co-ordinate the campaigns talked about above.
- *Link these policies to others that affect workers here and abroad:* against government support for International Monetary Fund and World Economic Forum. Against government plans to restrict unions' right to organise here. Anti-union laws must be repealed and there should be no more stripping back of awards.

F. Education

EDUCATION FOR ALL, NOT JUST THE RICH

Status: *Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).*

Education is a fundamental right for all people, yet the policies of successive governments has been to turn education into a privilege; with wealth as the main entry qualification. At all levels, the public education system has been systematically dismantled, while private schools enjoy billions in taxpayer subsidies. Early childhood education is increasingly out of the reach of most working people, leading to increased pressure on parents, in particular mothers, to exit the workforce. This is in fact privatisation by stealth. From the beginning of primary school to the end of secondary school, parents are required to pay for what is ostensibly a “free education system”. Public school buildings are often in disrepair, class sizes are too large, and the virtual monopoly of text book publishers leads to vastly inflated prices for essential education materials. Higher education is becoming a lottery where the winning ticket is a wad of banknotes. Socialist Alliance will fight to restore public education at all levels, creating a universal, free, quality secular system open to all those who need and want it. This would preclude the need for taxpayer subsidies to private institutions, which would be fully funded by those who choose to provide and use them.

- *Universal, free access to quality childcare and preschool and after.* School programs for all; recognise the skills of childcare and early education teachers and mandated wage parity with other education professionals.
- *Free, quality, secular education.* No upfront university fees; abolish the Higher Education Contribution Scheme; abolish all TAFE fees and fees for post graduate and overseas students; Stop public schools from imposing fees in the form of “voluntary” levies.
- *A guaranteed independent income for students.* A fully indexed, living wage for students set well above the poverty line; abolish the student loans scheme, pay apprentices at least the base rate for a qualified tradesperson during their training.
- *Increased funding for public education.* Fund tertiary and TAFE places for all who qualify; end government funding of private training providers and schools; halt forced amalgamations and school closures; increase corporate taxes to fund education and training.
- *Needs-based, diverse staffing of public education from kindergarten to university.* Improve quality through hiring more permanent teaching staff to reduce teacher workload and class sizes; end the casualisation of employment in all sectors of education; no discrimination in employment; affirmative action programs to train and hire more Indigenous educators and more women in non-traditional areas; stop the harassment of union activists and other dissenters.
- *Guaranteed access for all.* Develop, fund and enforce policies to ensure that women, migrants, Aboriginal people, gays and lesbians and people with disabilities have access to an education free from harassment, stereotyping and discrimination; education in an atmosphere of respect for all viewpoints and for dissidence and non-conformity. Full funding for literacy programs: every person has the right to learn to read and write. Ensure full funding for English as a

Second Language programs; provide courses in Indigenous and other community languages; fully fund resources to integrate students with disabilities; expand childcare places at universities and TAFE colleges.

- *Curricula which serves the needs of students.* Eliminate stereotyping in curriculum materials and resources; run courses which explore and teach about the history of oppression, including women's studies, Indigenous studies, ethnic studies, gay and lesbian studies and labour studies; education for life, not just for work; quality, factual and non-moralistic sex education in schools; education programs to counter homophobia and anti-gay violence in schools.
- *Students, staff and community control of education-student control of student affairs.* Independent student unions; replace business representatives on governing councils with elected union, student and community representatives.

G. Environment

Text 1

CEASE THE VANDALISM OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Status: *Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).*

Capitalist globalisation is destroying the earth. We live under the reign of a class willing to jeopardise our lives and those of future generations for quick cash.

Capitalism destroys habitat and renders species extinct, yet the survival of animal and plant life is essential for human progress and should not be counterposed to so-called "development". We are bombarded with chemicals in our food, water and air. We are assailed by poisons at work, at home and in our communities. In our hands, technology will be used for human progress; in the hands of capitalists, it is used to plunder our world. The destruction of the once-mighty Murray-Darling river system, the mobilisation of megatonnes of salt which threatens not only agriculture, but many rural towns and even Western Sydney; the lunacy of open-cut and acid leaching uranium mines; the huge volume of asbestos released from decaying cement sheeting and insulation -these are disasters which may take centuries to rectify, even in a socialist Australia. "Capitalism" and "sustainability" are mutually exclusive concepts. Only socialism is sustainable. But it is necessary to stop the destruction of our world now, as a matter of urgency.

- Commence a comprehensive environmental restoration and employment program, fully funded by a tax on corporate bank transactions; including full training and award wages for all workers; preference to be given to displaced timber and agriculture workers, rural unemployed, Indigenous communities and displaced small farmers. This program to include:
 - Replanting of forests in dry-land and other salt-affected regions;
 - Replacement of open irrigation channels with pipes;
 - Installation of subsidised solar heating and solar power units in all domestic dwellings;
 - Removal of exotic species such as willow and carp from river systems;
 - A comprehensive recycling system for all waste materials;
 - Reconstruction of salt-damaged infrastructure;
 - Construction of renewable energy generation plants;
 - Clean-up and restoration of contaminated and degraded industrial sites;
 - End logging in old growth forests; end land clearing for agriculture-evict pastoral leaseholders found illegally clearing and hand the land back to Indigenous owners;
 - End the confiscation of Indigenous land for mining and agribusiness;
 - No new coal-fired power stations; fund renewable energy, not greenhouse gas production;
 - Immediately close all uranium mines and shut down the Lucas Heights reactor without replacement;
 - Phase out agribusiness farming in the Murray-Darling basin; stop all new farming, and commercial development in salt-affected regions;
 - No Genetically Modified Organisms-ban all importation and production in Australia;
 - Reduce water use by steeply increasing prices to big companies; mandate the use of recycled water for all industrial purposes;
 - Mandated strict emission levels for all new vehicles, industrial plants and commercial developments; phase in similar standards for existing installations; remove taxes on low emission vehicles for private use and fund a buy-back scheme for old, high-polluting cars;
 - Mandated container deposits at point of sale and institution of penalty taxes on all suppliers of non-recyclable packaging;
 - Mandated humane treatment of animals and full protection of endangered species and habitats.

Text 2

ANTI-NUCLEAR POLICY

Status: *Submitted by North Sydney Socialist Alliance to the Founding Conference. Submitted for discussion to the Socialist Alliance.*

- No new nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights and decommission the re-licensed HIFAR reactor currently operating;

- A safe and properly funded disposal program for the existing nuclear waste from Lucas Heights, to be maintained in a way accountable to the public;
- No nuclear waste dump for international commercial use in Australia;
- Close the operating uranium mines and no new mines to be approved;
- No Australian support for George W. Bush's National Missile Defence program and renewed, active support for the non-proliferation agreements in place

Text 3

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE NSW DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY STATEMENT AND BACKGROUND PAPER

Status: Proposal from Michael Morphett (Sydney Northside branch)

Preamble

Reduced to essentials the three most valuable commodities available on earth are the sun, topsoil and water. Together with the carbon and water cycles and the weather systems they are the basic necessities of life.

They should be valued above all else, way beyond mere money, and treated with commensurate respect.

The sun is, luckily, beyond the reach of humans but our mis-use and degradation and despoiling and loss of earth and water are appalling and totally unsustainable. The worst countries in this regard are the industrialized western nations.

There is no point in laying all the blame on farmers, graziers etc. While there is lack of knowledge and prejudice by some sections of the agricultural industry, there is a profound lack of choice for all in the agricultural industry.

Market driven economics has loaded the farmers with debt. The need to service that debt and the vagaries of internationally manipulated prices means that they have to squeeze the absolute maximum from their holdings. No longer is it economically possible for farmers to leave paddocks fallow or even leave stands of trees. Double cropping is usual. Farmers are encouraged by multinational agribusiness companies, the huge petrochemical fertilizer, herbicide and insecticide conglomerates and the genetic engineering industry to maximize the farmers' profits by using their products.

Increasing use of terminator genes and other manipulated genes locks farmers into the cycle of purchase of seeds and specialized fertilizer, herbicide and insecticide.

Thus they are caught between the banks and the multinationals. A rock and a hard place.

Everybody knows that the environment is in poor shape and heading for worse. In our environment policy, the Socialist Alliance focuses on these problems of course, but far from being a negative "doom and gloom" view, our policy contains in every case an innovative, imaginative and practical solution.

To solve any problem, the real and underlying causes have to be clearly identified.

The Socialist Alliance looks truly at the causes of environmental problems and, unlike all other political parties, has the courage to say that most of them are caused by rapacious, profit driven corporate greed and the stupidity, cowardice and lack of imagination of beholden governments.

Land Use

Land clearing for broad scale agri-business style land use continues unabated in the western districts of NSW. This in spite of the fact that land clearing indisputably leads directly to dry land salination and loss of topsoil. It takes nature between three hundred and a thousand years to produce one inch of topsoil under natural conditions. It is estimated that one kilogram of Darling Downs wheat involves the loss of three to five kilograms of topsoil. This is mining soil on a once only use basis and must be the ultimate in vandalism. The lack of political will to stop this destruction by successive Liberal and Labour state governments is attributed to the need for farmers' votes. Does the Labour Party need or ever get National Party votes? No. The real reason that a ban on land clearing would signal government interference in the trans national way of doing agri-business. Environmental scientists say that in Australia sixty billion dollars needs to be spent over ten years and fifteen billion trees have to be planted to overcome dry land salinity.

Governments of all persuasions are ideologically bound to support the international capitalist system and economic rationalism.

What other style of land use can be implemented and how can it be paid for? In Australia we could easily pay more for our food products to have them produce on a sustainable basis. Farmers would welcome a system of production that does not force them to destroy their land and frees them from the clutches of big business. The madness of market economics doesn't consider the sixty billion dollar land remediation cost but it has to be paid. The alternative is to continue to add to the total of salt affected land in Australia, already equivalent in size of the state of Victoria. Do we want to add a man made salt desert to the five major deserts we already have? This on our best, precious soils? True to greenhouse-effect predictions deserts are on the march everywhere.

Australian topsoils are fragile, thin, old, exhausted and lacking in nutrient and humus. Lack of political imagination and courage has seen, for more than a century, our sewerage disposal system treat waste and pump it out to sea where it does harm. Why not treat it and transport it for incorporation into our soils where it would provide the lacking humus and nutrients and rejuvenate the soils.

Urban sprawl along the coastal strip in NSW is rapidly covering a lot of our good soils in the high rainfall areas. A progressive state government would encourage the expansion of inland regional centres by tax incentives for business relocation and would transfer government departments. A socialist government, one where the people own things like banks and insurance companies, could simply allocate services.

Further land degradation has been caused recently by the importing of industrial pollutants, mixed with soil, bagged and then sold as so called fertilizer. This profit at any price practice should be totally banned.

Logging of old growth forests is opposed by the Socialist Alliance as being a totally unnecessary destruction of unique eco-systems. These forests are the habitat of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna and are important seed banks. Wood products, which we all use directly or indirectly, can and should be provided from sustainably logged plantations of appropriate tree species which could form part or all of the fifteen billion tree salt remediation program. Part of the CO2 dimension of the greenhouse effect problem can be managed by harvesting and using wood in such a way that it doesn't rot or burn. In other words, as a carbon store in the form of buildings, furniture, etc.

A tree's ability to transform CO2 to carbohydrate is greatest at a relatively early stage of the tree's life.

Rice and cotton, both gross users of water, seem inappropriate for Australia. Rice might be grown in the monsoonal north but was a dismal failure in the Ord/Humpty Doo area. Hemp might be a replacement for cotton but it is claimed that the soil in the middle east was ultimately destroyed by growing hemp. There is a species of cotton from India that doesn't need much water or fertilizer. This should be investigated and trialled.

The environmental reasons for opposition to woodchipping are irrefutable but there is no point in a policy that merely opposes the use of woodchips. The Socialist Alliance says that the capitalists have promoted the overproduction and rampant consumption of consumer durables, many of which are woodchip hard board. Laws should be enacted to force manufacturers to provide recycling for their products.

The Socialist Alliance opposes the potentially dangerous practice of gene manipulation of food crops for purely commercial reasons. We recognize however, the enormous potential benefits to the human race of gene therapy. Therefore research is not opposed.

Water Use

An important aspect of our land management is water usage. Australia has an abysmal record of past and present water usage both urban and rural.

Rural use of water at present contributes to wetland or irrigation induced soil salinity. Instead of profiting from the proven technology of drip irrigation as used in Israel and other countries, where water is scarce and its true value is known, we in Australia, the driest of all the inhabited continents, continue to waste incredible quantities of water. Irrigation practice in this country, including the MIA and Darling/Murray Basin of NSW, transports water in open aqueducts or drains vast distances in a hot dry climate so that a large percentage of it evaporates. The water is then often used to either flood irrigate level fields or sprayed profligately over the whole field. The water table is thereby raised causing salinity. This part of the usage chain also results in further evaporation and so only a tiny percentage of the total amount of water pumped and transported actually reaches the root of the plant, which is the only place it is needed. The other effects of all this is to reduce flows in rivers to below environmentally sustainable levels causing algal bloom, water salinity, loss of native species, arguments and resentments between states.

The answer is massive public works to install pipes and drip irrigation and phase out cotton and rice production.

Artesian water use in western NSW is unsustainable. Artesian basins are being emptied at such a rate to cattle and sheep that they will take thousands of years to refill, if at all. Instead of cattle and sheep why not farm drought adapted kangaroos and emus. Many western holdings are in effect kangaroo farms, like it or not. A bonus from the harvesting of native species is that the damage to soils by cloven hooved animals would not occur.

Urban water use is not much more sensible. In our home we use first rate expensively produced drinking quality water with only a small percentage actually used for drinking. It is absurd to use such good quality water for washing the car, watering gardens and flushing the toilet. But we are provided with no alternative.

In the drier Mediterranean countries houses have always been built over large excavated pits which hold rain water. In NSW, our building code should be altered to mandate the use of such pits under houses and driveways. Rainwater tanks can be attached to existing dwellings and provision made in all houses for grey water re-use and second quality water for general use. Householders should be encouraged to plant gardens of native floral species which need little if any watering.

The aims of these measures would be to make each household relatively self-sufficient in water and to educate householders in water conservation.

To that end we support those scientists and environmentalists who say that water is woefully under priced which leads to a general under-valuing of it.

Energy

The greenhouse effect problems associated with the use of fossil fuels are well known. Less widely known are the hidden costs and paid subsidies in the use of these fuels which distort the economics of the fossil fuel based electricity generating industry.

For instance, the use of coal attracts enormous government subsidies in the form of zonal and other tax breaks, large subsidies for rail freight and infrastructure below cost. If these costs were to be taken into account and if a carbon tax was imposed to cover the environmental costs, then coal fired generation of electricity would be many times more expensive than it is at present.

Alternative sustainable energy generating systems are criticized on many counts: some valid, many not.

The prime criticism is one of cost. The present cost in so many cents per kilowatt hour of coal fired electricity is compared to photo voltaic (PV) solar generated electricity for instance.

This is comparing a method without subsidies and costs and massive CO2 pollution factored in to one without subsidy producing no pollution. In addition, coal has the advantage of economies of scale not enjoyed by PV as yet.

PV, wind, solar steam turbines and tidal are also criticized on the grounds that their output is “peaky”, that is it is only available when the sun shines, the wind blows etc., whereas demand is more constant.

This criticism is invalid on several counts. Firstly, the very peak of electricity demand in this country occurs on hot sunny summer days for the air conditioning load, both commercial and domestic, which is obviously when solar power of all forms is at a peak.

Secondly, Australia is such a large country that it is difficult to imagine any time of the day when one naturally based system or the other was not producing some output. It is usually not claimed that these alternate energy forms would be relied on totally but used in conjunction with present systems.

PV output can be improved greatly by mounting panels in such a way that they follow the sun. This is technically quite easy and inexpensive but is not usually done.

The most important and exciting news in alternate energy field is the “Solar Tower of Power”. Melbourne based company, Enviro Mission is an energy company planning to build a one thousand metre tall power station seventy kilometres east of Mildura by September 2005 with a generating capacity of two hundred megawatt.

The “Solar Tower”, based on a design by Professor Jorg Schlaik from the University of Stuttgart, Germany, has as it’s operating principle the use of the sun’s radiation to heat a very large body of enclosed air. Being warmer than the surrounding atmosphere, this air will begin to rise. By causing it to flow through windmill-style turbines on it’s journey up a tall chimney, electricity can be generated.

The enclosed air or greenhouse solar collector will be a roughly circular canopy of transparent plastic material measuring approximately five kilometres in diameter. This canopy, or roof, will slope upwards towards the centre drawing in air from the edges. In the centre will reside the tower, a one thousand metre structure, with a base of around one hundred and seventy metres wide. On a sunny day, the air at the bottom of the tower will be around 35 degrees Celsius greater than the ambient air temperature, causing it to flow at roughly fifteen metres per second.

In the lower atmosphere, temperatures fall by one degree Celsius per one hundred metres of altitude. Thus at the top of the tower, the ambient air temperature will be able ten degrees Celsius cooler than at the bottom, just by virtue of it’s height, this effect being cumulative with the greenhouse heating of the air.

About forty metres up from the ground, thirty two turbines placed in the chimney will be driven by the rising air, in turn driving generators.

The Solar Tower Generator will have the ability to produce electricity under cloud cover even at night.

To achieve this, sealed water tubes are placed under the canopy, filled once only during manufacture. During daylight hours solar radiation will heat this very large mass of water. At night that heat will be released. Varying the amount of water under the canopy will alter the output versus time of day generating profile of the system.

A smooth low curve is produced, obviating the criticism of peaky output.

For seven years in the 1980’s a pilot fifty kilowatt prototype solar tower plant was operated at Manzanares, Spain. Built by the Spanish government and Professor Jorg Schlaich, the plant proved the technology.

Each year it is estimated that the plant will reduce carbon dioxide output by an astounding nine hundred thousand tonnes, satisfying both Australia’s Kyoto treaty obligations and the 1997 Federal legislation stipulating that nine thousand five hundred Gwh of the nation’s electricity must come from clean, green renewable sources by 2010.

Fusion, charcoal/wood and nuclear generated electricity are sometimes touted as alternatives.

To dispose of each of these in turn:

Fusion: To contain the incredibly hot plasma necessary for fusion, a very intense magnetic field is needed. Such is the necessary strength of this field that it can only be obtained by electro-magnets wound with super conducting wires which in turn can only exhibit this property at extremely cold temperatures. Thus the vast temperature differential in close physical proximity presents insurmountable technical difficulties. This technology will have to wait for super conductivity at room temperature.

Charcoal/Wood: If ever there was a daft idea this is it. Somebody should tell the politicians promoting this scheme that adopting Stone/Bronze Age technology is not a step forward.

Somebody should tell their “scientific” advisers that oxidizing a hydro-carbon produces carbon-dioxide.

Nuclear: Horrendous pollution potential for thousands of years to come renders this technology unacceptable to most Australians and should not be considered for electricity generation.

The Socialist Alliance says that the environment is a clear demonstration of parliamentary democracies’ inability to achieve anything worthwhile at all.

The environment has been the “motherhood” issue in the West for the best part of thirty years, enjoying wide spread public support, scientific backing, constant media attention and intense efforts by environment groups and politicians. Poll after poll in the West has shown people to be willing to pay higher taxes to have the environment looked after.

All this and yet after thirty years an objective look at the environment shows that it is in worse shape now than at the beginning. This is in some ways an over simplification and leaves out certain issues but is essentially true.

The only forces against this huge and popular movement is the profit motive and power of international capital.

H. Housing

Text 1

AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HOUSING IS A RIGHT

Status: *Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).*

Housing is a basic human right. Currently there are thousands of people on waiting lists for public housing throughout Australia. Many are forced into the private rental market where up to 50 per cent of income or more goes on rent and accommodation is often below a decent standard. Across Australia there is an increase in homeless people.

- • Establish a large-scale building program to make good quality, energy efficient, affordable public housing available for all who choose it. Stop the privatisation of public housing.
- • Build creatively designed public housing to suit a wide variety of domestic arrangements, including the needs of people living communally, in extended families and in Indigenous communities.
- • All housing developments must include the provision of local health, education and other services and access to quality public transport.
- • For community control of public housing through democratically elected housing boards comprised of tenants and housing workers.
- • Strengthen legislation covering both public and private tenants' rights.
- • Enact rent control—for a sliding scale of rent for low-income people based on earnings. All rents to be capped at a maximum of 20 per cent of income.
- • Mandate high standards for private accommodation and require landlords to fix problems and maintain private housing stock in good condition Nationalise and renovate all substandard landlord holdings.
- • Expand funding to housing co-operatives.
- • Provide high quality, community-based, supported accommodation for people with disabilities or other special needs. Fully fund refuges and other secure emergency accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence.
- • Establish a publicly owned and controlled housing finance corporation to provide low-interest home loans for those in need.

Text 2

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE HOUSING POLICY

Status: *proposed by Housing Policy Group*

Imagine...

Imagine a world in which everybody had a home—and they knew they could afford their mortgage payment, or that their landlord couldn't sell the house out from under them.

Imagine a world in which all homes were close to services—shops, schools, childcare, public transport, medical care. That we no longer allowed the development of isolated, broadacre suburbs.

Imagine a world in which public housing was available to all who needed it, no longer marginalised as welfare housing.

Imagine a world in which we could choose whether we wanted to purchase a house, or rent publicly, or privately, or house ourselves collectively in a co-operative, and all options were available.

The reality today...

If the daily media hype is to be believed, we are in the midst of an unprecedented housing boom. Almost every day, new figures show house prices scaling new heights. But this is a superficial bonanza, which has the potential to turn into a social catastrophe. Even now, many workers on low to medium salaries are excluded from buying their own home. As housing affordability slips to its lowest levels on record, the great Australian dream of home ownership is under threat for broad strata of people who used to take this ambition for granted.

Many working class Australians—particularly since WW2—managed to save a deposit, get past the first few difficult years of their mortgage repayments and eventually wind up with a secure place to live. It now takes nearly 40 percent of average household income to support repayments on the median priced Australian house—selling for \$339,400 in June 2003. Housing debt as a percentage of household assets has increased by 60 per cent because of rising house prices. The problem isn't just that housing is too expensive, it is also that incomes are too low.

Negative gearing tax benefits encourages speculative investment, which inflates the market prices. This results in hundreds of thousands of ordinary working people being driven out of the market. Loans to investors are increasing and now account for 45 per cent of total funds made available for housing from lending institutions.

Housing left to the banks, private developers and real estate sharks has meant “through the roof” house prices, lengthening waiting lists for public housing and up to 50 per cent of our income going on house mortgages or rent.

[Stats now of people able to afford housing eg stats from SA below:]

“For low-income earners—the bottom 40 per cent of income earners who get paid less than \$632 a week—clearly not. We have done some assessment that showed people in the lowest 40 per cent of the income range were only able to purchase less than 5 per cent of the housing available for sale. Part of the challenge is that affordability is hitting the next income percentile those who are typically middle-income earners. For essential workers like police officers and teachers, affordability is becoming a problem as well.”.

Twenty years ago in Adelaide a house in the median price bracket would sell for three times average annual income. Today it is six or seven times that figure. In other capitals the situation is worse, particularly in Sydney where house and land packages have risen by 31 per cent in the last year alone.

In the past, the home could be sold to fund nursing home costs in old age or to provide a boost to the finances of subsequent generations. This pattern was at the heart of the widely held belief that Australia was the “lucky country”, spared many of the worst excesses and insecurities of capitalism. The fact that working class families became small stakeholders in the system of private property served to damp down disquiet at many of the inequities and injustices in Australian society.

For those who did not wish or could not afford to go down the mortgage path there was the option of private sector rental or high quality public housing at affordable rents. Now, private rent offers no security - leases are for three, six or twelve months. Public housing has become unavailable to all but the most desperate.

Since the 1990s, Federal funding for public housing has plummeted. Only those with complex problems are catered for and those who are simply poor are left languishing on the waiting list.

Spiralling house prices and rents have driven many low-income earners out of the market and into the living rooms and onto the floors of relatives. Low, stagnating or fluctuating incomes and factors such as casualisation have reduced purchasing power. These people have found it hard to provide security for their children. With no permanent address, schooling has often suffered.

We live in a wealthy society. There is no excuse for tolerating homelessness, or socially isolating broadacre housing, or sky-high rents.

A different future...

So is our imagined world of justice and accessibility in housing merely an impossible dream? We don't think so.

Consider how different the world would be if the \$XX billion per minute that is spent on military hardware was redirected to social services. Or if the billions of dollars in profits that are made each year by the biggest corporations was spent on public and community needs. Or if workers and communities had the power to decide how the industries and services that they run operated. Or if we could immediately recall any politician who didn't listen to the people who voted them into office. That would be a very different world for all working people.

Making progress towards a world in which everyone has their basic needs for housing met requires, in the here and now, a collective and constant demand for the right of all people to affordable, secure housing, regardless of race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, health status, age, wealth or disability.

Essentially, market forces (capitalism) isn't up to the job of ensuring affordable housing for all. It never has been, never will be. Every modern capitalist society has housing policies that PROTECT housing from the market, rather than rely on the market. Market forces don't work, never have, never will. Only a complete fanatic would leave anything important up to the market to get right.

The real problem for socialists engaging with the housing issue is that part of the post war 'settlement' the working class were given access to housing ownership (well most of us anyway). And the ones who have it may indeed profit for it if they 'trade down' and sell their family home.

But increasingly the rest of us are locked out of home ownership and even affordable rental housing because of rapid increases in prices due to capital switching and heaps of other factors. So you really have one section of the class (owners) pitted against the other (renters who are paying off the owners' mortgages).

Access to affordable housing may yet provide one of the strongest drives for the forming of a government of people's unity, a government of left and progressive forces committed to the use of the country's resources to meet the needs of the people. The time to start getting active in the building of such a coalition is now!.

We demand action...

As essential steps towards adequate housing for all Australians, Socialist Alliance demands immediate government action on the following:

- Launch a large scale program of quality social housing.
- Dump once and for all the lie that “public” must mean high-cost, inefficient and second-rate.
- Support communalist self managed and not-for-profit housing forms—co-ops both rural and urban.
- Expand public housing so it is a viable housing form. Make it mainstream and end the welfare stigma.
- Expand the availability of affordable rental housing in healthy neighbourhoods to promote economic and cultural diversity and broaden opportunities for low-income households to live in neighbourhoods that offer safety, good schools, quality services, and access to employment opportunities.
- Cancel the debts of the state housing departments to the federal government.
- Create more social housing for rent by introducing legislation compelling construction companies to build one new home for rent for every ten new homes built for sale. These new homes for rent would be owned and managed by a community housing organisation. This would provide several thousand brand new homes for rent each year.
- Establish public housing tenant forums with real powers at neighbourhood and citywide level along with similar forums for housing association, co-op and crisis housing tenants and for those in the private rented sector.
- End negative gearing for residential property investors.
- Link income policy and housing policy.

- Support initiatives that help low-income families find and keep jobs, build skills, and advance economically as strategies for making housing more affordable.
- Re-regulate the finance sector and bring its institutions under social control.
- Give planning a higher priority.
- Ensure that recreational, cultural, educational and social facilities receive priority in town planning, and that housing and employment opportunities and childcare are linked.
- Tax land.
- Follow the lead of the Tasmanian government and invest stamp duty in affordable housing for low income people.
- Introduce rent control legislation
- Establish bond boards in each state.
- Establish a publicly owned housing finance corporation to provide low interest housing loans.
- Funding to meet all crisis housing needs.
- Reduce the strain on crisis housing by having long-term, secure social housing for clients to move on to.
- Regulate boarding houses to ensure their accountability.
- Provide whatever resources are necessary to homeless organisations to end rough sleeping.
- Fund safe housing for women, children and men who have suffered domestic violence.

It is impossible to create economic security under capitalism. Things like universal job security, full employment, a fair days pay for a fair days work and so forth, are all fundamentally incompatible with capitalism. It is necessary for most people to suffer insecurity and want, it is necessary for thousands to be unemployed, for thousands to suffer from poverty and sickness, for many to be homeless. These evils can be minimised somewhat with sensible reforms of the worst excesses of capitalism, but the only way to eradicate them entirely is to get rid of capitalism.

The majority of people are not ready to adopt socialism. We can put forward a less radical reform agenda to minimise the evils, while also requesting a democratic mandate for a social revolution to permanently end capitalism and socialise the means of production.

On the other hand, in reforming housing provision one has to be careful not to seriously wound the market. Basically, there needs to be a balance between subsidising profits for capitalists and subsidising essential needs for low income earners. If we can't put The Beast to sleep for good, we'd better remember to at least keep it fat and comfortable in the meantime. We need a balanced diet which won't enrage The Beast by getting between him and the public trough, while minimising the number of homeless dying of exposure on the streets as the fat capitalists gorge themselves. (This is known as Compassionate Capitalism.).

We need to offer policies that aim to dampen or remove speculation in this form of commodity (real estate industry and the property market) as much as possible. This would mean people's need for housing would be better met but *only if* the state takes over provision of large tranches of cheap housing (implying wealth transfer via land tax and direct provision and rent controls). Of course taking the profit out of the housing market means that the state has less places to tax as well if capital gains are smaller. Which is why reformism is kind of doomed to fail unless you are a nice corporate socialist/democratic Scandinavian country with high tech industries that can generate profits skimmed by the state under a high taxing regime.

Of course such policies would remove a lot of profits not just for those who benefit from the industry of land as commodity but also small time investors (much of the better off working class) who own one investment property or holiday house and want the capital gain. So they like rising house prices and they are 67% of the population. And they like negative gearing.

Long term solutions...

Socialism involves housing and other goods and services being produced entirely to satisfy needs, rather than being a commodity that is bought and sold. The Socialist Alliance needs to make the point that this is its long-term objective, an economy where not only housing, but all goods and services are produced and distributed solely for the purpose of meeting needs. Where everyone enjoys economic security. But socialists know this isn't going to happen overnight and in fact most socialists recognise that it can't be brought about merely by a change of government. The means of production needs to be physically seized from the capitalist class and a political party can't do that, even if it has the will and holds the reins of government.

But just because it is impossible for the Socialist Alliance to ever be able to implement socialism, doesn't mean it should refrain from advocating socialism. Neither should it be in the least ashamed of advocating more rational and less socially destructive policies in the context of the present capitalist system.

Socialism is about decommodifying housing altogether. Which implies a completely different housing system in which methods of allocation other than market processes are implemented. These methods would be fair and environmentally sensible as well.

I. Health

Text 1

UNIVERSAL, FREE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE

Status: Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

Access to healthcare is progressively being removed from the poor, and many so-called “high-paid” workers.

The public health system is failing, and many in rural and outer metropolitan areas have limited access to even basic general practice medicine. Hospital waiting lists are overcrowded, with too many nights where emergency wards are on ambulance bypass. Meanwhile the private health system benefits from billions of dollars in direct and indirect government subsidies, on top of the semi-compulsory private health insurance rip-off, where working people who can “afford” it pay huge premiums for little return. Where the public system, even in its damaged state, is relatively efficient, the private sector is a black hole for money, with little useful health outcome.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme is little more than a welfare scheme for drug companies. On top of this, insurance difficulties have resulted in many specialist doctors threatening to retire unless governments legislate away the rights of injured patients.

In the face of the health crisis, the Howard government is cutting funding to public hospitals and wants to dismantle Medicare. Working people and the poor have a basic right to universal free, quality healthcare.

- Abolish all subsidies to private health institutions, including the private health insurance rebate.
- Nationalise all unviable private institutions.
- Extend the Medicare scheme to cover the full cost of all health, medical and ancillary services, including 25 dental, aged care, prosthetics, rehabilitation, alternative therapies and preventative services.
- Fully fund all public hospitals; re-open closed facilities in rural and outer metropolitan regions, and build new facilities to ensure that rural and remote communities receive the same access as those in urban areas.
- Fully fund free, quality health education and screening programs.
- Legislate to protect the right of access to free, quality mental health care, without pressure to conform to traditional gender roles or other social stereotypes.
- Guarantee patients’ control by legislating the right of access to all information required for informed consent; the right to appoint a legal guardian of a patient’s choice; the right to choose or refuse medical treatment; the right to die and the right to assisted suicide.
- Full government indemnity guarantees for all health professionals who leave private practice and join the public health system.
- Massive expansion of student positions in tertiary health education faculties to overcome the shortage of health workers in nursing, aged care and general practice, particularly in rural areas.
- Construction of State-owned pharmaceutical plants to manufacture drugs to end the ongoing rip-offs by the international drug cartel.

Text 2

DRAFT HEALTH POLICY

Status: draft developed by David Scrimgeour

1. The Socialist Alliance will retain and extend Medicare

The Socialist Alliance endorses the principle of universal health insurance which underlies Medicare, and emphasises that Medicare is not just a “safety net”.

If Australia is to have comprehensive universal health insurance, paid for by progressive taxation and ensuring equitable access to health care for all, there is no need to have private health insurance. Currently, private health insurance is massively subsidised by the Australian government, and it contributes little to total health expenditure. By abolishing the tax rebate for private health insurance, 2.5 billion dollars could be freed to provide more resources for public hospitals.

Private health insurance encourages a two-tier health system. The Socialist Alliance would phase out private health insurance so that all Australians would have the same level of health insurance and the same access to health care.

The coverage of Medicare would be extended to include dental care and appropriate ancillary services such as physiotherapy and psychological counselling.

The Medicare rebate paid to doctors would be increased to an appropriate level, to ensure that doctors receive adequate remuneration for bulk-billing.

The Medicare levy would be increased by an average of 1%, to help fund these policies. However, rather than a flat tax, currently 1.5% of taxable income, the levy should be a progressive tax, like income tax, where the percentage of taxable income which would constitute the Medicare levy would increase with increasing income.

2. The Socialist Alliance would make multi-disciplinary community primary health care services the cornerstone of the health system.

The Socialist Alliance would ensure the availability of adequate funding for community health centres providing comprehensive primary health care, focussing initially on areas of greatest need.

Funding would be made available to general practitioners working in poorer areas to convert their practices to community health centres, with the doctors and other health professionals working in salaried positions within the public service.

3. The Socialist Alliance would ensure that essential pharmaceuticals are available according to need.

The Socialist Alliance would retain the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and legislate to ensure that it is quarantined from any trade agreement and any undue influence of pharmaceutical companies.

The Commonwealth Serum Laboratories would be re-nationalised, and given the specific task of producing cheap generic drugs.

The Socialist Alliance would lobby in international forums to overturn the Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) which allows the large pharmaceutical companies twenty-year patents on drugs which they have developed. This is actually a restriction on free trade, which denies people worldwide access to drugs at an appropriate price, and contributes to the massive profits of the pharmaceutical companies at the expense of untold suffering and death.

Text 3

SOCIALIST ALLIANCE INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH

Status: draft developed by Lalitha Chelliah

The Socialist Alliance bases its policy on health promotion, disease prevention and timely treatment of illnesses it includes promoting good health. It aims to encourage a healthy community in a healthy environment and reduce health risks. Health includes the physical, mental and social well being of the community. It is a resource used by individual on a daily basis.

A healthy life depends on a healthy environment, safe working conditions and enabling people to increase control over this improvement process. It will be based on the concept of hope and community control.

The current situation, in health, where the waiting time to see a doctor in a hospital could range from four to seven hours has to be abolished. The enormous waiting lists have to be eradicated.

Key Health issues

- Every individual to have equal access to health services and facilities according to their needs.
- Multi-disciplinary primary care community health centres (CHC) to be created as the corner stone of the delivery of easily accessible services. This will apply equally to rural areas.
- The community will have access to general practitioners, specialist services, ancillary services and alternative medicine.
- Public hospitals will be sufficiently funded so that waiting lists will be abolished.
- Special services for women, migrants and aboriginal communities will be made available.
- The aged and children will have special emphasis due to their special circumstances.
- Mental health will be made a priority given its prevalence in the community.
- Emergency services will be upgraded to service communities efficiently.
- People with disabilities will have services available to enable them to function as normal members of the community.
- Essential pharmaceuticals will be made available on the basis of need and not as dictated by large companies. Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme will be retained and improved to meet the needs of the community. It will also be guaranteed from any trade agreements.
- The Commonwealth Serum Laboratory will be renationalised and given specific task of producing generic drugs.
- Research and development will be funded and promoted on the basis of needs of the community.
- The Socialist Alliance will lobby in international forums to overturn Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. It will also lobby against patency laws that pertain to restricting access to much needed pharmaceuticals and production of healthy food.
- Democratic joint committees of medical professionals, other health workers and members of the community will be established to coordinate the CHCs. The community will be fully involved in the process of establishing and administering the CHCs.

Medicare

- Free medical services will be made available paid by Medicare in CHCs. The allocation of CHCs and funding will be based on the needs of each community.
- Salaried doctors, paid by Medicare, will be available in the CHCs in proportion to the needs of each community.
- Salaried specialists services will also be made available in CHCs.
- Qualified alternative health practitioners will be encouraged to join the CHC team.
- Communities will have access to physiotherapists, speech therapists, dental services, occupational therapists, ante and post natal services, counsellors and dieticians at the CHCs.
- All public hospitals will be funded and staffed to be able to cope with the needs in their communities. Public hospitals will be built in areas where there is a need for them.
- Establishment of Women's Health Centres providing access to contraception and abortion facilities, cancer screening facilities.
- Special services will be organized according to the needs in each community.

General health

- Prevention of ill health will be primary in our policies.
- The promotion of healthy living styles will be promoted by special campaigns.
- Schools will be funded to promote healthy eating and providing healthy food for children.
- Strategies for reduction of stress levels and accidents at work places will be formulated.

Mental Health

- The prevalence of mental health issues is well known in the community. There is also a stigma attached to these conditions. Strategies will be formulated to address these issues.
- Counselling and psychiatric services to be made available free of charge in CHCs.
- Facilities to be established to assist the reversing of the prevalence of this problem.

Funding.

- The prevention of ill health will reduce the cost of treatment in the long run. The inclusion of the community in the decision-making processes will also assist in this process. The fact that the community and individuals take responsibility for their health will boost the type of healthy community we envisage.
- The Medicare levy will be increased by an average of 1% to help fund the policies we put forward. A progressive tax will be implemented to create equity. The enormous funding allocated to defense will be redirected to meet health needs in the community. The Socialist Alliance will phase out private health insurance so that all Australians would have the same level of health insurance and the same access to health care. This will save the community several millions of health dollars. Until our policies are fully established general practitioners will be adequately remunerated for bulk billing.
- The current Medicare Scheme will be extended to include other essential services like dental, optometry, speech, dietetics and auditory services.

J. Immigration, Refugee and Migrant Rights

Text 1

REMOVE THE BARRIERS TO IMMIGRATION

Status: Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

Properly managed, Australia has more than enough room for the few thousand people who seek refuge from persecution or poverty. The treatment of people who arrive by sea in particular has been despicable, leading to misery, mental illness and several hundreds of deaths on overloaded, unseaworthy vessels. The current government has demonised desperate people with the aim of pandering to the Hansonite vote. However the basic framework for the racist, inhumane treatment of refugees was enacted by the ALP, which continues to refuse to split from its past policies.

- Close all the refugee concentration camps, including in Nauru and Papua New Guinea, and free all detainees.
- Abolish the cruel and arbitrary Temporary Protection Visa System. Refugees are welcome here.
- Overturn all immigration laws which favour wealthy business migrants.
- Remove all limits on the admission of working class and poor people and migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Treat as refugees all women fleeing sexist violence and persecution.
- Abolish the pro-business “points” system and the requirement for sponsors to pay upfront bonds.
- Abolish all restrictions on social security for new arrivals.
- End unequal treatment for gay men, lesbians and transgendered people in immigration; recognition of same-sex relationships.
- No discriminatory immigration quotas; remove HIV status from health tests for visas.

Text 2

REFUGEES

Status: Adopted by Second National Conference.

- Socialist Alliance confirms its support for asylum-seekers in Australia, whether in detention centres, in the community on temporary protection visas (TPVs) or bridging visas, or whether in hiding.
- The Alliance condemns the Liberals’ crude racist lies and their attempts to divide workers in Australia by fomenting hatred against our brothers and sisters fleeing persecution and hardship. The Alliance deplores the ALP’s acceptance of much of the Liberal agenda.
- By contrast, the Alliance calls for the abolition of mandatory detention, the closure of the camps, permanent protection for all refugees and asylum seekers not just those who meet UN criteria, and the scrapping of TPVS, amnesty for those who have escaped the camps, and the end to harassment of those refugees from countries including East Timor, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere who face deportation to so-called safe homelands.
- The Alliance pledges its continuing support for the refugee rights movement. In particular, Alliance branches will contribute to mobilising for the World Refugee Day rallies around the country on June 22.

K. Industrial Relations and Union Rights

Text 1

DEFEND AND EXTEND WORKERS’ RIGHTS

Status: Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

“Deregulation of the Labour Market” is a mantra of neo-liberalism, espoused by both major parties and right-wing journalists and academics. Like all corporate spin, it is meant to obscure the huge volume of anti-worker legislation aimed at reinforcing the master-servant relationship which underpins working life under capitalism. Socialist Alliance, building on the historic experience of workers here and overseas, knows that all genuine gains by working people have come through battles on the picket lines and on the streets. Conversely, intervention by capitalist governments-of all political views-is aimed at weakening our ability to struggle and snatching back hard-won concessions. The Alliance will campaign to overturn all anti-union laws and to halt government intervention on the side of employers. On top of this, the Alliance will campaign for the introduction of constitutional protections of wages and working conditions.

- Repeal the Workplace Relations Act and all laws against “secondary boycotts”.
- Abolish all regulation of strikes, picket lines, street marches and rallies.
- Full legal recognition of unions and union representatives.
- Enact a “Workplace Bill of Rights” providing guarantees of conditions, including a living wage for all workers-employed, unemployed, disabled and retired- equal pay for work of equal or comparable worth, generous maternity and childcare entitlements, protection of workers’ entitlements and a sliding scale of working hours to ensure full employment.
- Abolish all “work for the dole” schemes and so-called “mutual obligation”.
- Mandatory jail for company directors responsible for workplace deaths and injuries.
- Full, unlimited, employer-funded injury and sick pay.
- Quality, employer-funded childcare and after-school programs.
- Restore all workers’ rights to civil action in the courts.
- Remove homophobic exemptions which exclude gays and lesbians who work with children from anti-discrimination protections; full support for gay and lesbian teachers and childcare and youth workers.
- Affirmative Action plans to redress Australia’s outrageously gender- and race-segmented workforce.
- Enact heavy fines for employers who breach Equal Opportunity laws; end sexual harassment in the workplace.

Text 2

POLICY TOWARDS ATTACKS ON MILITANT UNIONS (CFMEU AND OTHERS).

Status: adopted by Second National Conference.

The Liberals’ attack on the CFMEU and other construction unions through the Cole royal commission is the cutting edge of their offensive against unionists.

The Socialist Alliance seeks to encourage the widest active support within the union movement for the construction unions. A defeat for militant organisation on construction sites would be a defeat for workers everywhere.

The attack on the constructions unions follows hard on the heels of the attack on the case of Skilled Six and the ongoing persecution of former AMWU Victorian state secretary Craig Johnston.

This conference therefore resolves:

- That the next Alliance broadsheet should be around the theme of defending the construction unions.
- That the Alliance seeks to initiate a broad-based lobby of the ACTU’s congress in Melbourne in August, calling for the union movement to unite against Tony Abbott and the Cole recommendations. To build such a lobby, Alliance branches/districts (especially in Geelong and Melbourne) should call broad-based organising meetings, inviting union officials and members, sympathetic community groups, and Green and Labor representatives. The aim would be to mobilise, in particular, rank-and-file delegations, official union contingents, and ACTU delegates.
- That the Alliance organises major public meetings in each city in defence of the construction unions and to discuss responses to the Liberals’ attacks. These meetings should be similarly broad-based.
- That to aid this process, the incoming National Executive should prepare a petition to the ACTU setting out the case for solidarity, and a model motion for union, ALP and Greens branches, community and student groups.
- That the Alliance will continue to support the Skilled Six campaign through fundraising and attendance at pickets and protests.

L. International Relations (includes Palestine and Cuba)

Text 1

END THE GULF INVASION AND WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Status: Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference (2003). Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

One planet under US imperialism-that is reality today. Without sustained opposition, the gang of warmongers occupying the White House will convert large parts of the “developing” world into piles of rubble populated by corpses. The Socialist Alliance actively seeks to build links with the tens of millions of people across the globe who have taken to the streets to protest against imperialist aggression. As part of the fight against the war the Alliance will campaign

vigorously against the Howard government's militarism and its competition for the spoils of war in the Middle East. The Alliance will continue to intervene in the anti-war movement with the clear message that to end war it is necessary to end capitalism.

- Imperialism out of the Middle East.
- Recall all Australian troops; end military spending and redirect all personnel to socially useful projects.
- Immediately end the blockade and lift the sanctions against the Iraqi people.
- For a penalty tax on big business to pay reparations for the invasion of Iraq.
- No to Howard's war budget-block supply to make Howard face the electorate.
- Unions must take a stand: Stop Work to Stop the Occupation of Iraq.
- Israel out of Palestine.

Text 2

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WAR ON IRAQ

Status: adopted by the Socialist Alliance Second National Conference.

At this Second National Conference the Socialist Alliance recommits itself to the struggle against imperialist war and against the growing militarism of the Australian government:.

Socialist Alliance demands:

- End the occupation of Iraq;
- Troops out now;
- That the peoples of Iraq, including the Kurds and other minorities, be free to determine their own future;
- That a referendum on self-determination be held in Iraqi Kurdistan.

As an immediate step against Australian militarism we call on the Senate opposition parties to block the military provisions of the 2003 federal budget. We also restate our commitment to building the anti-war movement with a view to opposing imperialism's next aggression from a higher level of awareness and preparedness.

We also commit to contribute in whatever way it can to the rebuilding of the workers' movement in Iraq.

In this way the Socialist Alliance will make as big a contribution as it can to making the imperialists pay the highest possible price for their coming wars, to strengthening solidarity among the world's peoples, and to advancing humanity towards the precious goal of a world without war.

Text 3

FIGHT CORPORATE GLOBALISATION AND END PRIVATISATION

Status: Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

The struggle for profit leads inevitably to war. For this reason, the fight against the Iraq war and the fight against corporate globalisation are strongly interlinked.

Without access to the wealth of developing countries, the US military machine could not afford its weapons of mass destruction.

Any blow against the global corporate hegemony is a strike against war.

Socialist Alliance will work to re-energise the anti-corporate movement and work to give it an explicitly anti-capitalist character.

- Cancel the debt of all developing countries.
- Withdraw from the World Trade Organisation and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.
- No "free trade" agreement with the U.S.
- Trade union rights and a living wage for workers throughout the world.
- Australian imperialism out of the Pacific and Southeast Asia.
- For international solidarity with workers of all countries.
- End downsizing and mass redundancies-open the corporate books to public scrutiny.
- Reverse privatisation and nationalise all essential industries.
- Abolish tax concessions for transnational corporations.

Text 4

WEST PAPUA

Status: adopted by Second National Conference.

1. Socialist Alliance supports the struggle of the West Papuan Independence Movement, and condemns the Australian Government's support of the continuing occupation by the Indonesian Government and the brutal suppression by the Indonesian Military of independence activists.

2. Conference resolves that Socialist Alliance show solidarity for West Papuan activists, political prisoners and exiles and commits to building networks and sponsoring meetings to build awareness around West Papua.

Text 5

COLOMBIA

Status: Special resolution adopted by the Founding Conference.

This Founding Conference of the Socialist Alliance:

- Calls for an end to any kind of U.S. intervention in the internal matters of Latin American countries, particularly Colombia;
- Resolves to put pressure on national governments to stop any support for foreign military aid to the Colombian Security Forces, which are the biggest human rights violators in the Americas; and
- Demands that foreign countries' armies, such as the United States' and Britain's, stop sending mercenaries to companies that contract their pilots and military personnel to be part of the Colombian Security Forces.

Text 6

ON THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING AND THE COMMONWEALTH BUSINESS FORUM

Status: Special resolution adopted by the Founding Conference.

This Founding Conference of the Socialist Alliance resolves to condemn the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and to have an obvious presence at the blockade of the Melbourne Commonwealth Business Forum and at the unity march on October 5 and support protests on October 6 against CHOGM in Brisbane.

We note the following and as such should condemn the forum.

- CHOGM is a forum committed to breaking down barriers to free trade like labour and environmental standards;
- CHOGM delegates will make up 40 per cent of the delegates at the next World Trade Organisation meeting in November;
- CHOGM'S agenda is no different from the World Economic Forum that met in Melbourne, or the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle;
- CHOGM will be discussing the implementation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services—an agreement to hasten the privatisation of health, education and public transport; and
- CHOGM is part of the imperialist structure that suppresses indigenous people.

Text 7

ON PALESTINE

Status: Adopted by the April 26, 2002 National Executive meeting.

1. Israel out of the Occupied Territories.
2. For the Palestinian's right to self-determination.
3. For a fully independent Palestinian state.
4. End to Australian government support to the Israeli occupation.
5. Support the right to return of Palestinian refugees.

Text 8

SOLIDARITY WITH VENEZUELA

Status: Adopted by the January 31, 2003 hook-up of the National Executive.

In April of 2002 a coalition of big business and elements of the Venezuelan military, with the help of the United States, staged a military coup against the popularly elected government of Hugo Chávez. The coup failed after mass popular demonstrations forced the military to return Chávez to office.

Since then big business has increased its attacks and confrontations with the Chávez government. The US has continued to support a campaign of destabilisation orchestrated by ex-military officers, responsible for the failed April coup and the multimillionaire managers of the oil industry which is a mainstay of Venezuelan economy.

This right-wing coalition has organised protests and since December last year it has staged a lockout of workers which has caused massive economic chaos in the country.

The workers and the popular movement in Venezuela have fought back to defend their constitution and their elected government.

The future of the political situation in Venezuela is not only a concern for the majority of the workers and unemployed and underemployed of Venezuelan society but for the people of Latin America and the rest of the world.

Like Chile 1973 the military and big business interests, in conjunction with U.S imperialism, are trying to destabilise a popularly elected government. The only crime of the Chávez government like Allende in Chile has been that he has implemented social reforms that have alleviated the plight of the most oppressed classes in Venezuela and has introduced policies that have begun to redistribute the national wealth away from big business to the poor.

Throughout Latin America in recent elections the people have voted in governments that are willing to look at more socially progressive reforms and that confront the power and wealth of big business and U.S economic interests.

The workers and popular movements in the continent have been re-invigorated. They have elected progressive governments in Ecuador and Brazil and continue to organise mass protests in Argentina, Bolivia and El Salvador to resist the impact of the policies being pushed by the international financial institutions and U.S imperialism, including its criminal 40-year-long blockade of Cuba.

The Socialist Alliance condemns the rightwing campaign to oust President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and calls on the left and progressive movement in Australia to show their solidarity with the people of Venezuela who support the government of Chávez.

This has particular significance as the US (backed by the Australian government) prepares for war on Iraq to protect its access to oil in the Middle East. Venezuela is the world's fifth largest exporter of oil and is a major supplier to the US.

The Socialist Alliance supports the slogan coined by the workers movement of Argentina "Que se vayan todos" (They all must go). All the exploiters and politicians who are putting the interests of big business and the International Financial Institutions ahead of those of the majority of the people of Latin America.

- Support the popular and workers struggle in Venezuela!
- No U.S interference in the affairs of Latin America!
- No to neo-liberal policies of privatization!

Text 9

SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA

Status: adopted by second National Conference.

In the face of rising threats from the US government against Cuba the Socialist Alliance Second National Conference:

1. Supports the solidarity call with Cuba made in a recent statement by Nobel Laureates and other prominent intellectuals for "policy makers to uphold the universal principles of national sovereignty, respect of territorial integrity and self-determination, essential to just and peaceful co-existence among nations";
2. Calls upon the USA to recognize the complete integrity of Cuba, a Cuba that includes Guantanamo Bay and hereby calls upon the USA to close their base there;
3. Calls upon the United States to cease all operations towards Cuba that encourage and fund the overthrow of the Cuban government;
4. Demands that the United States immediately lift its economic and tourism blockade of Cuba;
5. Calls on the left and progressive movement in Australia to show its opposition to the renewed attacks by the United States towards Cuba and support solidarity actions that oppose U.S imperialism's attacks on Cuba.

M. Lesbian, Gay & Transsexual Rights

Text 1

FULL EQUALITY FOR LESBIANS, GAY MEN, BISEXUALS AND TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE

Status: Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference. Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

We live in a society which attempts to dictate sexual preference and gender identity through the promoting of marriage and the nuclear family as the legitimate institution. Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgendered people suffer oppression because their lives are a direct threat to the nuclear family, which is an economic cornerstone of capitalism. The Socialist Alliance is opposed to all attempts to shoehorn people into sexual and gender conformity. We believe it is a basic democratic right that the self-definition of sexual preference and gender identity should be recognised as a matter of individual choice. Heterosexism exists at almost every level in this society, and that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is entrenched in all of the key institutions of society- education, health, the law, the media, family, church and state.

- Enact enforceable anti-discrimination legislation to protect lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, people living with HIV/AIDS and transgendered people. Remove existing exemptions for private schools, insurance industry, tax system, superannuation etc; legislate for the right of transgendered people to be issued with passports, drivers licences and other documents specifying the gender of their choice.
- Extend to same-sex relationships equal status with heterosexual defactos in superannuation, immigration, taxation, family law, industrial relations and any other laws and regulations; for the right of gays and lesbians to choose to marry if they so wish; independent incomes [Newstart, Pensions etc] for all regardless of relationship status. No State-enforced economic dependency.
- For the right of gay men and lesbians to adopt or foster children; no discrimination against gay men or lesbians in child custody cases.
- Full funding for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth programs, including refuges and housing services, health services, coming out, self-esteem and suicide prevention programs.
- Support for Pride Marches, the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, film and video festivals and other queer community events; defend and extend gay, lesbian and transgender programming on the ABC, SBS and community broadcasters; an end to the vicious and destructive portrayal of gay men, lesbians and transgender people in some sections of the media.
- Support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered workers; promotion of strong policies within unions to defend gay, lesbian and transgendered workers; support for the establishment of gay and lesbian caucuses within trade unions.

Text 2

AGAINST THE OPPRESSION OF LESBIANS AND GAY MEN

Status: Adopted by the NSW Socialist Alliance.

The Socialist Alliance supports politically independent and self-organising social movements that fight the oppression of women lesbians and gay men, transgenders, people with HIV and sex workers through mass action, public demonstrations, lobbying, voting and by building alliances with the broader working class, feminist, and anti-capitalist movements.

We oppose sexism, racism, ageism, and discrimination against people with disabilities within the lesbian and gay communities, as we do in the broader community.

We support and campaign for the following demands.

- Retain “homosexuality” as a ground in NSW Anti-Discrimination Act.
- Strengthen NSW anti-discrimination law by removing exemptions for organisations run by religious groups.
- All public funding for education, youth, aged, health, employment and welfare to be directed through non-discriminatory government and/or secular non-profit community organisations.
- Legislate against use of non-violent homosexual ‘advance’ as a defence of “provocation” in violent crime.
- No discrimination on the basis of homosexuality or transgenderism in child custody and adoption.
- Full social, legal, trade union and industrial recognition of same sex relationships.
- No discrimination in entitlements to welfare on the basis of relationship status, gender or sexual orientation.
- For the right of every worker to nominate who will inherit and benefit from their superannuation, irrespective of relationship status.
- State funding for anti-prejudice community education programs.
- Education in schools to incorporate positive material on homosexuality and transgender.
- State funding for rebuilding the Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras as a political celebration.
- State funding for gay, lesbian and transgender youth services including an expansion of youth housing.
- Full union rights for workers in gay and lesbian services and businesses.
- Remove gender from identity documents such as birth certificates drivers’ licences, and passports.

N. Military and Defence

No documents submitted.

O. Social Justice & Welfare

DEFEND AND EXTEND WELFARE

Status: Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

Socialist Alliance supports universal welfare rights for all who are in need. The welfare system was fought for and won by the working class over generations in order to protect its members from the unemployment and poverty intrinsic to capitalism. The “old age pension” was introduced in 1908 and, the last big win was the introduction of the “supporting mother’s benefit” in 1972. The end of the post war boom saw the start of efforts to roll back the welfare state. The ALP introduced the assets test on the age pension, ended non-means tested family allowances and reduced young people’s access to payments. This signalled the start of hundreds of changes, all designed to reduce payments, tighten eligibility criteria or impose waiting periods. Welfare rights are now under renewed attack from the Coalition Government, which argues that the family is the best provider of welfare.

Under the guise of “welfare reform” the government is imposing “mutual obligation” on older workers, parents and disabled people, putting pressure on all workers’ wages by requiring welfare recipients to volunteer or take low-waged jobs. Like governments around the world, the Howard Government is attacking the welfare state because this is what the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank requires. Socialist 24 Alliance says welfare payments for all those in need are a right!

- A guaranteed independent income for all at a living wages. No to State-enforced dependency-end assessments based on relationship status or parental income.
- Abolish work for the dole, immediately pay all Community Development Employment Program workers an award wage and abolish all mutual obligation requirements.
- Scrap the 104-week waiting period for newly arrived migrants.
- Establish voluntary, well-staffed, quality, public programs for those who wish to enter the workforce; provide free education and training; tackle child care, workplace accessibility, discriminatory employment policies and other barriers to employment.
- Eliminate unemployment by reducing working hours with no loss of pay.
- No further outsourcing of welfare services; keep Centrelink in public hands; renationalise the job network.
- Scrap funding for the war machine-money for welfare not warfare!

P. Women’s Rights

Text 1

FOR WOMEN’S LIBERATION

Status: Draft submitted by Freedom Socialist Party to Second National Conference. Opposed by one or more delegates. To be submitted for discussion in Socialist Alliance branches and policy working groups (see Second National

Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8). Mainly incorporated in the "Gender Agenda" (see Text 2 below).

Women are the majority of the world's population.

They constitute not only an absolute majority, but at least half of every ethnic grouping and every class.

Women are the majority of the old and the young; they are the majority of the poor. They are the doubly oppressed of every oppressed minority, as well as the most economically exploited workers. They are also potentially the greatest social and political force in the world because they have the least economic, political and social stake in the status quo and the most pressing need for real social change.

Under capitalism, women are considered the property of men, the Church and the State. Despite the gains of the women's liberation movement, women's reproductive rights are tightly controlled through oppressive laws, particularly the inclusion of abortion in most criminal codes. It is an unconditional right of every human being to control their own body. For women to gain control over their lives, they must control their minds and bodies.

Bearing and nurturing children is only one part of a woman's life.

Children should not be women's private responsibility, but neither should a woman be forced into childbearing by economic or other coercion.

- For unconditional equal treatment under law for all women, regardless of age, marital status, disability, health, race, sexual orientation, size and weight, citizenship status, political ideology, lifestyle or income level.
- Full, legally guaranteed economic independence for all women; equal pay for work of equal or comparable value.
- Full, generous employer-funded maternity leave; full, generous parental leave for all parents, required to care for infants in the post-natal period and during the illness of a child.
- Fight the breast cancer epidemic through fully-funded, comprehensive research programs; free quality breast screening programs for all women; comprehensive breast cancer education in schools; free, state-of-the-art comprehensive treatment and rehabilitation programs for all breast cancer patients.
- Stop violence against women; fully funded refuges for women and children who have been the target of sexual, physical or psychological violence; free, quality, sympathetic treatment and rehabilitation for victims of sexual assault.
- End the media imposition upon the public of sick, distorted, demeaning and sexually exploitative images which seek to create a skinny, slinky, white, heterosexual standard of "beauty," thus perpetuating discrimination against the vast majority of women with other body types, against women of colour and against lesbians.
- Increase funding to the ABC, SBS and community broadcasters to greatly expand programming which allows women to intervene in political and social debate as real people, rather than stereotypes.
- Free, safe, accessible abortion on demand. End the prohibition on the import of Mifipristone (RU486).
- No State interference with a woman's reproductive decisions during pregnancy;
- Expand contraceptive choices, free safe birth control for both women and men to be available for all who request it, regardless of age;
- Equal access to donor sperm, IVF and reproductive technologies for single and lesbian women;
- No forced sterilisation, stop the reproductive genocide against Indigenous people and people with disabilities;
- Stop "population control" programs used by imperialism to perpetrate genocide in Third World countries.

Text 2

GENDER AGENDA: A CHARTER FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Status: Adopted by the National Executive, February 2004.

Imagine ...

Imagine a world where any woman could walk down any street, day or night, and feel no fear of harassment or assault, and where society denounced domestic violence as so abhorrent that every home was safe.

Imagine a world where girls did not merely dream of being an astronaut, a mechanic, a prime minister or a scaffolder, but said with complete confidence: "That is what I'm going to be when I grow up".

Imagine a world where parents on their way to work or classes, or just to have some time to themselves, dropped their child off at a child-care centre in their street or workplace happy in the knowledge that their child loves going there, learns new things, and is well-fed and cared for.

Imagine a world where elderly and disabled women live independently and at home for as long as they wish because they have a guaranteed, decent income and there are plenty of community support workers to help with housework, health-care and transport.

Imagine a world where there really is equal pay, and it is decent pay so that no woman is forced by poverty into prostitution, or seeing her children go without food or new clothes, or not having the child she wants, or living with someone only because he can pay for her accommodation.

Imagine a world where every woman has a real choice about whether or not to have children, unconstrained by economic or social factors, and where safe, reliable contraception is widely accessible and abortion is freely available.

Imagine a world where women, in all their individuality, love the bodies they were born with, and where women express their sexuality proudly and joyfully, without fear or favour.

Imagine a world where people, not private profits, matter – where all people's basic needs are automatically addressed, and their hopes and dreams for a fulfilling life are valued.

The reality today ...

In 21st century Australia, women have supposedly achieved equal rights. Yet women still do most of the household chores and the care of children and sick, disabled or elderly relatives. The double burden that this imposes on women who also need to or want to do waged work is barely acknowledged by society.

Whether they are migrant women working 12 hours a day for \$4 an hour in the suburban sweatshops of Sydney or Melbourne, or tertiary educated teachers, nurses or public servants who spends 60% of their wage on child-care fees, or unemployed single mothers on the 200,000-long public housing waiting list, or students trying to survive on Austudy/Abstudy payments, which are now 37% below the poverty line, life for most women in Australia is getting harder every day.

- Despite the introduction three decades ago of equal pay, affirmative action, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation, women's average weekly earnings are now only 66% of men's - *less* than they were relative to men's 10 years ago, and declining.
- The workforce participation rate of women in Australia is now lower than any comparable industrialised country, and the proportion of women with full-time and/or permanent (as opposed to casual) employment is falling. 70% of all part-time jobs are held by women, but 22% of women working part-time would like more hours. Meanwhile, 30% of male workers are working more than 50 hours a week and more than half of them would like fewer hours.
- 500,000 women who want to be in the workforce are not, 32% of them because of lack of child care. State and federal government funding for women's services is less now than it was a decade ago, despite a steady increase in the number of women and children living below the poverty line.
- Under new tax policies, working-class women with dependent children are being penalised for going out to work - the lower a family's income, the higher the effective tax rates faced by women who work, and this disparity actually increases with the number of children.
- A female welfare recipient with dependent children has her welfare payments cut if she partners with a man - *whether or not* she wants to be economically dependent on him, and *whether or not* he can or does support her and her children. Meanwhile, bitter post-divorce disputes over child support are endemic as working-class men struggle to support two families on declining real wages and sole mothers continue to swell the ranks of those living below the poverty line.
- Most women in prison are there because of crimes of poverty. The system fails to meet the needs of these women and their children then punishes them by putting them in an even more vulnerable situation.
- In 1996, 23% of women in marriage or de facto relationships suffered domestic violence. There are no more recent figures because the government has cut all funding for collecting them. While women's refuges have to turn away as many women as they accommodate each night, in 2002 \$10.1 million of funding allocated for domestic violence programs was diverted to pay for the National Security Public Information Campaign's "anti-terrorism" advertisements and fridge magnets.
- The rate of sexual assaults reported to the police has increased by around 9% per year over the last few years. The most reliable recent estimates are that around 250 women are raped each day in Australia.
- In most states abortion is still illegal and is becoming much more difficult for poor, rural and/or young women to obtain. Meanwhile, lesbian couples still cannot adopt children or access IVF programs in most states.
- As sexist images of women flourish in the mass media, eating disorders and the deaths that result from them are increasing among young women.

A different future ...

So is our imagined world of justice and equality for women merely an impossible dream?

We don't think so.

Consider how different Australia would be if the \$43.3 million *per day* that was allocated for military expenditure in the 2003-4 federal budget was redirected to social services. Or if the billions of dollars in private profits that are made each year by Australia's biggest corporations was spent on public and community education. Or if workers and communities had the legislative power to decide how the industries and services they run operated. Or if politicians were truly accountable and could be immediately recalled if they broke their promises or didn't listen to the people between elections.

That would be a very different world for all ordinary people, and especially for women.

Making progress towards an Australia in which there is full economic, social and political equality for women requires, in the first instance, collective opposition to *each and every* government attack on women's rights - as workers, mothers, students, patients and welfare recipients. At the same time, women's ability to exercise these rights regardless of their race, ethnicity, citizenship, religion or disability must be defended and extended.

We demand action ...

As essential steps towards complete gender equality, the Socialist Alliance demands immediate government action on the following:

For equality and justice in the workplace

- Real equal pay for work of equal or comparable value.
- Automatic wage indexation that corresponds to *real* cost of living increases.

- Increase the minimum wage to a level that recognises that many workers, women and men, are solely responsible for supporting family members.
- Enterprise bargaining and individual contracts disadvantage women workers, who are more often in less organised sectors, so we call for all wage increases and improvements in working conditions to be automatically generalised across each industry.
- Extend full-time and permanent employee entitlements (sick leave, annual leave, etc) to all part-time and casual workers on a pro-rata basis.
- Legislate for and enforce programs in both the private and public sector to encourage and assist more women to be trained and employed in non-traditional jobs.
- 12 months' parenting leave fully paid by employer contributions to a publicly managed scheme; the right to return to the same job; and generous paid leave to allow parents to take time off work to care for sick children and attend school activities.
- Enforce anti-discrimination and affirmative action legislation to assist Indigenous women, non-English speaking background women and disabled women be economically independent.

For independence and equality in family life

- A living wage - which enables a decent quality of life, not just survival - for all welfare recipients and their dependents, and automatic indexation of all welfare benefits to cover real cost of living increases.
- A massive expansion of funding for community/employee-controlled, good quality, free child-care services in communities and, funded by employers, in large workplaces; these services to include after-hours, vacation and occasional care.
- No discrimination in out-of-work-support and parenting payments, regardless of marital status; increase the sole parent benefit for parents of dependent teenage children.
- Abolish all taxation measures that penalise families in which women are engaged in waged work.
- Reverse the privatisation of all utilities and other essential services, which has disproportionately adversely affected women and children.
- Expand affordable, good quality, secure public housing so child-raising can take place in a stable environment.

For women's control of their own bodies

- Remove abortion from all state Crimes Acts and Health Acts and make abortion available safely, free of charge and on demand through the public health-care system.
- Make safe, reliable contraceptives freely available to both women and men; end the prohibition on the import of RU486; make the "morning after" pill available free of charge.
- Enforce the law outlawing sterilisation without a woman's consent.
- No discrimination based on age, sexual preference or marital status for access to reproductive technologies. Women in prison to be able to use contraception, and have access to pregnancy or abortion care if needed.
- Restore Medicare bulk-billing and massively increase funding to public hospitals and community health services.
- Provide free menstrual/sanitary protection for all women as a public health service.
- Improve availability of women-centred pregnancy care, including state funding and insurance for community based midwifery and birth centres.

For an end to sexual violence and exploitation

- Strengthen and strictly enforce laws against sexual harassment.
- Restore and increase funding for women's services to ensure ready access to health centres, rape crisis centres, women's refuges and counselling services for all women and their dependants who need them.
- Launch a community education campaign in the media, schools and all other public institutions to promote positive, non-stereotyped, anti-sexist images of women in all areas of social activity.
- Repeal all laws against prostitution in order to end the criminalisation and victimisation of sex workers, and publicly fund comprehensive health-care, legal and personal support services, and alternative employment opportunities, for sex workers.
- Prosecute Australians who profit from the international sex trade and prostitution, and give full protection and rights to victims of the sex trade in Australia.

Q. Young People's Rights

No documents submitted.

R. Drug Use and Drug Law Reform

Legalisation of personal drug use; immediate trials of prescription heroin

Status: Submitted by Michael Arnold, Geelong Socialist Alliance, to the Founding Conference. Referred for discussion in the Socialist Alliance.

I feel this is a balanced demand. On the one hand it calls for something—heroin trials—that has already had viability studies and cost estimates completed. The trials could be quickly implemented, thus giving us a demand where the

chance for victory is very good. It is probably fair to say that many dependent heroin users are the most oppressed, most downtrodden and most frequently arrested of any drug users.

Heroin trials can provide immediate relief from crippling financial pressures, poor health, and the need for petty crime. At the same time by calling for legalisation we recognise the need for more far-reaching reform, for the right of all individuals to control their bodies, regardless of drug of choice, and we seek to remove a tool of social control from the state arsenal.

S. Urban Development & Public Transport

PUBLICLY-OWNED PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Status: Adopted by Second National Conference (2003). Content to be incorporated into the present Socialist Alliance platform, but with the style and form of presentation to be determined by the National Executive (see Second National Conference minutes, in Discussion Bulletin, Volume 3 Number 8).

Commuter transport

Commuter transport and the movement of freight require central planning and community control. The chaos of private ownership in the 19th Century and a century of bureaucratic neglect has left many areas with inadequate or non-existent commuter transport. The Victorian experience of private management of a vital public service has shown that artificial fragmentation of what should be a fully integrated system leads inevitably to chaos. This is true of all commuter transport and any integrated freight rail network.

Socialist Alliance stands for public ownership and control of all forms of commuter transport and rail freight.

- Re-nationalise all privatised public transport and rail freight; nationalise all bus routes, and fully fund them through a steeply sliding scale of levies on businesses employing more than 20 workers.
- Provide sufficient services to meet current demand and commence an ongoing program of network expansion to meet future demand.
- Fully staff the networks-staff on every station and a guard/conductor on every train and tram.
- End the unfair impost on island communities by fully funding passenger and light vehicle ferries, in particular to and from Tasmania; fully fund air transport to remote outback and island communities.
- Re-open closed rural rail lines where the infrastructure still exists and provide passenger rail services to communities which need them Alternatively provide a replacement bus service to meet community needs

Freight Transport and Roads

While rail freight has major benefits to the community as a whole, business is the main beneficiary of large subsidies from taxpayers for the use of an efficient means of transport for large volumes of goods. However, it is preferable to remove as many highly polluting, dangerous and damaging heavy vehicles from the road network as possible. The general road network, in particular motorways, freeways and major arterial routes, are chiefly of benefit to business.

- Extend the rail freight network with dedicated freight-only links in order to remove heavy vehicles from local roads. Introduce and enforce penalties to stop unauthorised heavy vehicle access to local roads.
- Re-nationalise all privatised tollways and abolish tolls for light vehicles and buses.
- Make business pay for its transport by introducing electronic tolling for heavy freight vehicles on all major roads and freeways, and discounted, volume-based charges for rail freight.
- All new freeways and major arterial roads to be built according to strict environmental standards.

T. Family support

No documents submitted.

U. Science & Technology

No documents submitted.

Appendix 1

Second National Conference resolution covering policy development process

Conference resolves:

1. To push along the process of Alliance policy development by forming policy working groups in the following areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.
- Agriculture and the countryside.
- Democratic rights and civil liberties.
- Economy and full employment.

- Education.
 - Environment.
 - Housing.
 - Health.
 - Immigration, refugee and migrant rights
 - Industrial relations and union rights.
 - International relations.
 - Lesbian, gay and transsexual rights.
 - Military and defence.
 - Social justice and welfare.
 - Women's rights.
 - Young people's rights.
 - Israel-Palestine conflict.
 - Cuba.
 - Drug use and drug law reform.
 - Disability access.
 - Public transport.
 - Family support.
 - Science and technology.
2. To conduct Alliance policy working groups as moderated e-groups open to any interested Alliance member;
 3. To call for volunteers to act as moderators for the various working groups, with the incoming National Executive to nominate moderators for each group as soon as possible; and
 4. To ask these working groups to produce draft statements of policy in accordance with a schedule to be established by the incoming National Executive.

Appendix 2

Policy drafts on areas not projected by National Conference

Media policy

Text 1

ON THE SENATE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Status: Special resolution adopted by the Founding Conference.

The Founding Conference of the Socialist Alliance resolves:

- That the Socialist Alliance make a submission to the References Committee of the Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee on relation to the Senate Inquiry into appointments to the ABC Board.
- That this submission be based on recommending legislative changes that determine the membership of the Board be publicly elected; that the managing director has no voting powers on the Board; the staff representation be increased to two; and the Advisory Council's role and make-up be broadened.
- That part of ABC funding be sourced from taxes on the advertising revenues of the commercial telecommunications and media industries.

Text 2

PRESERVE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE ABC

Status: Submitted by Anne Picot, North Sydney Socialist Alliance, to the Founding Conference. Submitted for discussion to the Socialist Alliance.

There should be an additional heading in the platform called "Preserve the independence of the ABC" and the following points below it:

- Restore and maintain funding to the ABC so the in-house television and associated services and production capacity are restored and maintained.
- Future appointments to the Board must be made on published criteria which must include a commitment to public broadcasting; board membership should reflect the ABC's existing and potential audiences, by region, ethnic background and age group.
- The Board's deliberations should be made publicly available. It should report annually to a standing committee of both houses of parliament.

Crime and policing

THE MAJOR PARTIES 'TOUGH ON CRIME' APPROACH IS WRONG! IT DOESN'T WORK!

Status: Submitted by Melinda Smith, Sydney Central branch, for 2003 NSW election campaign

The way Labor and Liberal are being “tough on crime” means that they are waiting until crime occurs then reacting. They announce big, tough sentences and increase police numbers, but do little and spend less on crime prevention.

The Socialist Alliance plan to focus on why people commit crime in the first place. Many studies have shown that the factors affecting offenders are poverty, inadequate education, intellectual disability, poor health, negative parent child relations, social inequality, racism, unemployment and general lack of opportunity in life. That’s why our focus is on families, schools, housing, employment, refugee rights, workers rights and the health system to ensure that every has a fair share. That’s where government money should be going not on building more and more jails!.

Labor and Liberal keep on trying to send more people to jail and for longer.

- A higher rate of imprisonment does not lead to a lower rate of crime. The United States has one of the highest prison populations and one of the highest crime rates in the world. In Australia, Victoria has one of the lowest crime rates and lowest imprisonment rates and the Northern Territory has the highest imprisonment and the highest rate of violent crime, per head of population.
- Sending people to jail increases the likelihood that they will commit more crime! Going to jail decreases your chance of getting a job, increases family breakdown, limits opportunities for education etc And while your in jail your learn more about how to commit more crimes!.
- The prospect of a “tough sentence” very rarely deters people from committing crimes. At the time when a crime is being committed most people aren’t stopping to think. Many are affected by mental illness, intellectual disability, drug dependency, poverty or social disadvantage.

The Socialist Alliance will only use jail as an absolute last resort. We want to look more closely at states like Victoria, to see how new legislation in Western Australia (which prohibits jail terms of less than six months) is working and to learn more from countries like Finland (which has reduced it’s prison population by two thirds with no increase in crime rates).

Labor and Liberal are only focusing on some types of crime. They are not interested in dealing with issues such as tax avoidance, white collar crime, environmental crime, consumer fraud, corruption, price fixing mandatory detention of refugees (including children) who have committed no crime, simply tried to save their lives! and our troops being committed to a war which the vast majority of Australians do not want to be involved in. These are crimes that often affect more people and involve greater social and economic costs than the crimes that hit the popular airwaves.

The Socialist Alliance plan to change this. We know that the tremendous wealth of Australia is concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority. Only by ending the concentration of power in the hands of that minority can the wealth that exists be used for the benefit of working people. Every major industry should be re-organised on the lines of social provision for need—publicly owned, and democratically controlled by the workers and the community.

DID YOU KNOW:

It costs between \$165-\$208 per person per day to keep someone in prison!

Labor spends almost as much on prisons (612 million) as it does on Community Services (641 million)!

One police sniffer dog costs the same as TWO schoolteachers!

