

# Australia's casualisation crisis

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**The Australian Unemployed Workers' Union (AUWU) works towards a future where everyone has the right to dignified social security and employment. We are all volunteer run, free to join, open to anybody, and we are non-partisan.**

The bulk of our work falls into campaigning and advocacy. We are currently focused on the Senate Inquiry into the *jobactive* system.

In order to receive an unemployment benefit, the government requires recipients to report to a job agency, which oversees a compliance regime of activities that is one of the most onerous put upon unemployed workers in the OECD. This is the essence of the *jobactive* system, which about 650,000 Australians are dealing with at any one time.

As a result of the financial incentives for job agencies, and of the power imbalance in the relationship between the Newstart recipient and their caseworker (who is often under-trained, overworked and under-resourced and has the power to suspend payments), relationships have a tendency to deteriorate from onerous into bullying.

People can contact our free advocacy services via our five-day per week hotline, email and website. Our services are overwhelmed by calls and emails from people who have had their payments cut off, are being forced into unsuitable activities, and have nowhere else to turn.

For example, we hear many stories of sole parents forced to go to Work for the Dole activities and leave their children unattended, young people told to do Work for the Dole rather than attend the training they prefer, people forced to attend multiple unnecessary appointments, or people who have their payments cut off because they failed to attend an appointment due to illness.

It doesn't have to be this way. For 30 years between 1945 and 1975, successive governments maintained a full employment economy, and unemployment was kept below two percent. Long-term unemployment and underemployment simply did not exist.

Quite rightly during this full employment period, governments viewed unemployment as a result of its macroeconomic policies. Since then, as the result of an unjustified fear of inflation, governments have chosen to maintain a high unemployment rate. And in a further attack upon workers, even though there is currently an average of 16 job seekers for every job vacancy, unemployment is seen as a failing of the individual.

Thousands and thousands of unemployed workers are locked into a no-win situation and punished for being unemployed.

We believe that with the right political will we can have full employment again, along with a strong social safety net to help people unable to work. This is the vision the AUWU hopes to share with all workers, from school leavers to retired, from invisible and under-employed to carers and disabled.

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## Taking Issue – Steven Katsineris

# The wrong side of history

**Australia's ongoing statements on the issue of Jerusalem have created a terrible foreign policy mess. Despite the Australian government saying it acts in Australia's interests, it seems clear to me that moving the Australian Embassy to Jerusalem suits the interests of the USA and is in the strategic interest of Israel, but it is definitely detrimental to Australia's national interests.**

Since the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem in May, the only other country to shift its embassy there has been US ally Guatemala. While Israel has controlled West Jerusalem since 1948 and considers the city its capital,

other countries maintain embassies in Tel Aviv because Jerusalem's territorial status remains unresolved.

The Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967 is regarded as illegitimate and Palestinians also lay claim to Jerusalem as the capital of their future state. Moving embassies there strengthens the Israeli hold over the occupied territory.

This is the latest action by Australia to ally itself more with the hard-line regimes in Israel and the US against the vast bulk of the world community. On October 16 this year the United Nations General Assembly allowed Palestine to head the biggest bloc of developing countries at the UN. The UN

General Assembly also voted overwhelmingly to grant additional rights and privileges to Palestine for 12 months of its presidency of 134-nation Group of 77. A staggering 146 states voted in favour of the resolution while only three countries the US, Israel and Australia were opposed.

As well as this, in May 2018, Australia and the US were the only countries to vote in the UN against a UN Human Rights Council's decision to investigate the killings of more than 100 protesting Palestinian civilians in Gaza by the Israeli military. Australia said it opposed the investigation into alleged violations and abuses of

International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law on the grounds it "prejudged" Israel.

"Australia is on the wrong side of history. Last night it was one of only two countries, the other being the United States, who voted against the UN Human Rights Council's resolution to investigate the killings of over 100 Palestinians, including children and injuries to thousands," Diana Sayed, Crisis Campaigner at Amnesty International Australia, said in a statement.

So is Australia really making principled and independent decisions for the benefit of its people or to carry favour with the USA. Moving our embassy to Jerusalem

and other recent positions taken by the Australian government on the Palestinian situation show how out of step Australia is with world opinion.

And its actions won't help the prospect of peace or a just resolution of the conflict, but just further emboldens an intransigent Israel and isolates Australia from the rest of the international community. And Australia's constant backing of Israel makes it complicit in the appalling crimes the Zionist state commits against the Palestinian people. ✱



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