

Build the Movement to Oppose AUKUS Nuclear Submarines

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Anthony Albanese's March 13 AUKUS announcement about how Australia would be acquiring nuclear-powered submarines is a massive escalation of militarism in the Asia-Pacific region and undermines peace in the world.

Over the next three decades Labor and the Coalition have committed to buying, building, operating and maintaining a fleet of more than eight nuclear powered submarines.

It amounts to the single biggest investment in Australia's "defence" capacity since colonisation.

The AUKUS program also represents an extraordinary waste of public money.

The program will exceed [\\$368 billion](#) — more than doubling the \$170 billion projected cost a week ago — with working people expected to contribute more than \$3 billion over the first three years.

To do this when we face the fight of our lives to stop runaway global warming and a growing [cost-of-living crisis](#) displays utter contempt for ordinary working people.

Albanese's enthusiasm to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States means that every part of the federal budget is under threat.

Opposition leader **Peter Dutton's** offer to negotiate budgets cuts, including to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, to pay for the [submarines](#) was probably support Albanese could have done without, as it was made very clear who will be paying.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has been quick to rule out scrapping the \$243 billion Stage Three

tax cuts to help foot the submarine bill.

Labor is using the [creation of just 20,000 jobs](#) over the next 30-years in relevant industries as a selling point. By that measure, it would have to be the least sustainable jobs creation program in history.

The billions should instead be used to address funding shortfalls in education, health and housing, along with the transition to renewable to combat the biggest existential threat faced by humanity — the climate crisis. Beyond Zero Emissions' (BZE) [Million Jobs Plan](#) showed in 2020 that more than 1.8 million jobs could be created through undertaking steps to reboot Australia as a low-carbon economy.

The government has been tight lipped on the potential environmental and health risks impacts posed by nuclear-powered submarines (Australia's and others) docking in harbours.

It has showed zero concern over AUKUS violating the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#), via a loophole that allows fissile material to be used for non-explosive military use such as naval propulsion.

The AUKUS submarine program also opens the door to private industries to ramp up their push for nuclear power, something the Opposition is keen to support.

[Defence minister Richard Marles](#) sought to justify Labor's bipartisanship on AUKUS by talking up the need to safeguard "security and peace" in the Asia-Pacific region.

The opposite is true.

The AUKUS partners' highly provocative move threatens an escalating arms race in the region. It will mean billions in profits for arms' manufacturers, already doing very well [from the war in Ukraine](#).

Albanese claims his government wishes to improve relations with China. However, AUKUS represents a determination by Western imperialist powers to try and block China's growth and influence, which they regard as a threat.

China is a rising capitalist power, albeit with command-style economic characteristics and a dictatorial government that does not rule in the interests of ordinary Chinese people.

The claim that China's growth represents a threat to the security and well-being of Australians is propaganda aimed at building public support for greater military spending and preparing us for any direct military conflict with China.

One impact of this government-media propaganda is rising racism against people of Asian descent.

The front page of [The Age](#) and the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) which interviewed five "experts" about how Australia could be at war with China within three years was the latest blatant softening-up exercise, timed just before the AUKUS announcement, and the [Defence Strategic Review](#) that is about to be tabled.

However, despite the propaganda, the public is still wary of war. A Lowy poll last year found 51% want Australia to [remain neutral](#) "in the event of a military conflict between China and

the US”.

It means that many are seeing through the lies: China is not about to launch a war or invade and AUKUS is an offensive, not a defensive, military alliance.

A number of unions have passed motions opposing AUKUS, and we need to encourage more to do that.

Former Prime Minister [Paul Keating’s criticism of Labor](#) has [given others in the Labor camp the courage](#) to speak out.

This is an opportunity to rebuild the anti-war movement before any war can be launched against China.

We need a foreign policy that is based on [justice and peace](#), not more militarism to prepare the country for a new cold war against China. We need a security policy that supports not only our needs here, but those of the people of the Asia Pacific, who are struggling with the real threat — climate change.

Socialist Alliance urges you to find and join your local anti-war group and pass an anti-AUKUS motion in [your union](#) or workplace association.

Only a broad-based movement has a chance of forcing Labor to sign the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) — which has now taken on new urgency — and to reverse course on the madness of the AUKUS nuclear submarines.

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