



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 14 July, 2025

Call or email your federal MP to demand they support a parliamentary inquiry into the AUKUS partnership and \$368 billion submarine deal.

AUKUS is the retro security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, hence the acronym, cooked up between then-Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, UK PM Boris Johnson, and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in 2020-21 (all now thoroughly discredited ex-politicians).

It is currently the subject of a UK Parliamentary inquiry, and a US Defense Department review.

It is conspicuous, however, that the only member of the AUKUS partnership that has not conducted an inquiry is Australia, especially since former prime minister Paul Keating pointed out in March 2023, when PM Anthony Albanese stood beside US President Joe Biden and UK PM Rishi Sunak in San Diego to announce the \$368 billion submarine deal, “only one is paying. Our bloke.”

Australians should be outraged that what is, in nominal terms, the single most expensive project in the history of our country, has not been subject to review by the Parliament that is paying the bill; therefore, the Australian people must demand their elected representatives establish an inquiry immediately that looks at all facets of the AUKUS agreements.

The Citizens Party is calling on all Australians to phone and/or email their local federal MP to demand they support a Parliamentary inquiry into AUKUS—see details below.

China ‘threat’ is extortion

The *only* reason Australia is even saddled with AUKUS and its earth-scorching bill is because over the last decade, Australians have been induced to fear and even hate China, by far our biggest and—ask our exporters—best trading partner.

Who induced Australians to fear China? The very countries to which we are paying hundreds of billions for AUKUS!

The USA and UK governments, and the biggest American and British arms manufacturers, heavily fund the Canberra-based war propaganda agency called the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), which for more than a decade has pumped out a relentless torrent of outright lies and



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propagandistic spin to vilify literally everything about China.

ASPI, assisted by the media, has spooked Australians into seeing China as a threat and accepting the need to spend hundreds of billions on American and British weapons.

In a 13 February 2024 *Australian Financial Review* column, ASPI's imported British deputy director Alex Bristow effectively admitted that the fear ASPI generates about China is intended to make Australians agreeable to demands for more military spending that flows into the pockets of ASPI's sponsors.

"We will not generate or sustain public consent for increased defence spending and the whole-of-nation effort required in the years ahead until our national security establishment stops publicly treating China as taboo", Bristow wrote, describing ASPI's efforts as "building the social licence for increased defence spending".

He added: "Being candid about China is not alarmist. Government openness about the threat posed by Soviet communism underpinned public consent for substantially higher levels of defence spending as a percentage of national income during the Cold War, including during Bob Hawke's Labor government in the 1980s".

Except that China is not the Soviet Union, it is our biggest trading partner from which Australia earns hundreds of billions in income every year.

Terms of reference

Australia needs an AUKUS inquiry with something like the following terms of reference:

- What is the *actual* threat which justifies AUKUS? The inquiry should hear all points of view, not just from the ASPI China hawks. What interest does Australia have in a US war over Taiwan?
- What is the rationale for the AUKUS partnership? Why those two countries that are on the other side of the world, instead of a security arrangement with our own neighbours in our own region?
- Is the so-called AUKUS Pillar 1 nuclear submarines deal in Australia's national interest? Is the expense justified? Is nuclear warranted? Will the submarines even be delivered and will we get our money back if they are not?
- Does the AUKUS Pillar 2 defence industry agreement benefit Australia, or does it hand over



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control of Australia's industrial base, and strategic resources, to the United States?

- Does Australia's 2014 Force Posture Agreement (FPA) with the United States, which governs the USA's use of its military bases in Australia—from its very oldest Pine Gap facility in NT to its future nuclear submarines base in Fremantle—actually serve Australia's sovereign national interest, or does it give up our sovereignty to a foreign power? What justifies the FPA now, compared with the period from WWII until Julia Gillard's government in 2011 when Australian government policy was always that there would be no foreign military bases in Australia?
- Do the USA's military bases, especially Pine Gap, implicate Australia in US military actions, including illegal attacks, and make us a legitimate target for military reprisals?
- Does AUKUS enhance Australia's security, or undermine it?

What you can do

Parliament resumes on 22 July, so we have two weeks to force an AUKUS inquiry onto the political agenda.

Call and or email your local federal MP this week, to demand they support an AUKUS inquiry in the interests of full transparency.

[Click here to look up the contact details of your local federal MP](#) by name, postcode, or electorate.

(Call their electorate office in your region, not their Canberra office.) Publication Date 08 July 2025

Liberal Simon Birmingham's move from bank protector in government to replacing Labor's Anna Bligh as chief bank lobbyist tells you everything there is to know about who's in charge in Australia.

A year after the Senate finished its inquiry into regional bank closures, in response to which the Big Four banks (supposedly) committed to a three-year moratorium on regional branch closures, Bendigo Bank—the “better big bank”—has brazenly and callously closed its Yarram and Korumburra branches in Gippsland in Victoria.

Both branches are the last banks in town.

When Gippsland MP Darren Chester tried to attend a local community meeting convened to discuss



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the closure of the Yarram branch, Bendigo Bank executives banned him from participating, saying they wouldn't stay in the meeting if Chester was there too.

"The better big bank? Hardly", Chester thundered in a 30 June Facebook post. "Talk about a bunch of sooks. ... From all reports, they refused to consider any options for keeping the branch open and continued their complete lack of respect for the Yarram and district community."

It's good Chester is speaking out like this, but we've seen it before. He attended the very first hearing of the Senate inquiry in March 2023 in Sale in his electorate, which he lobbied for, and gave a fiery speech in Parliament attacking the banks for closing branches.

Yet Chester should talk to his former Coalition ministerial colleague Simon Birmingham (both were ministers in the Morrison government), who is the incoming CEO of the Australian Banking Association (ABA).

Bendigo knows it will get away with closing these branches and devastating these towns because it is a member of the ABA, which is not just the most powerful lobby in Parliament, but effectively owns the Labor-Coalition (Lib-Nat) *Uniparty*!

Since 2017, the ABA's chief executive has been a former Labor politician, Anna Bligh, whose job as chief bank lobbyist has been to gaslight the Australian community into accepting that the destructive and disruptive policies of the banks are somehow positive and what the public want.

Bligh cheered the banks' drive to do away with cash, justified and even glorified the banks' aggressive branch closures as the customers' choice, and heaved the Albanese government to drop its policy to fine bankers personally for misconduct.

Now Bligh is finishing up, so the ABA has seamlessly transitioned to a senior Liberal politician, former Finance Minister Simon Birmingham, proving that the banks have only one party—the *Uniparty*!

Birmingham's first lie

In taking up the job that will involve, as Bligh showed, repeatedly lying to the public, Birmingham told his first lie for the ABA to Parliament when he unexpectedly announced his sudden retirement at the end of last year. Only revealing that his "new career pathway" would be in a "new commercially oriented direction", he blatantly lied: "You can all be relieved to know that it has



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nothing to do with lobbying, government relations or commentary.” In fact, he is now the most powerful lobbyist in government relations in Australia!

The proof that he had the ABA job already lined up came a few moments later when he offered this piece of shameless, gratuitous advice to his Senate colleagues, clearly rehearsing his future lines as chief lobbyist for the most profitable banks in the world: “We should also be clear that it’s important *to celebrate the profits of Australian companies, not undermine them*”, he said. (Emphasis added.)

From the shameless to the sinister, Birmingham then attacked Australians who resist the encroaching surveillance state: “We should also be bold in the use of data to drive government efficiency *and stare down the conspiracy theorists who jeopardise such productivity measures*”. (Emphasis added.) Of course, it’s not just the government expanding surveillance—the banks are leading the surveillance agenda by trying to do away with cash and force all transactions online where they can be tracked, which they also justify as “productivity measures”.

Et tu, Birmo?

The Australian Citizens Party is asking the question: did Birmingham earn his ABA chief gig when he helped knife Australia Post CEO Christine Holgate in 2020, for her policies that upset the banks, including her push to start a post office bank that would compete with the Big Four?

As Finance Minister at the time, Birmingham was one of two shareholder ministers of Australia Post, along with the Communications Minister—the board answered to them.

If they hadn’t already known, they quickly learned that the Cartier watches, for which Holgate was attacked, were given two years earlier, and were entirely appropriate awards for the executives who negotiated the best deal in Australia Post history.

An investigation that Birmingham commissioned reported to him that the executives had worked nights, weekends and public holidays to get the banks to pay \$220 million for Bank@Post, which saved Bank@Post (the sole banking service in 1,500 towns), restored Australia Post to profitability, and made small business licensed post offices viable.

Based on this report Birmingham should have restored Holgate to her role as CEO; instead, he pre-empted a Senate inquiry and appointed current CEO Paul Graham to ensure she couldn’t get her job back.



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This fateful decision put Australia Post on its current path of closing post offices and transitioning to a parcels business, not a postal service; however, it profited the banks, which immediately slashed what they pay for Bank@Post, and would have breathed a sigh of relief that they didn't have to compete with an Australia Post bank.

Those same banks are now paying Birmingham a very fat salary as their new chief lobbyist, the amount of which they refuse to disclose.

Nationals MP Darren Chester may rail at Bendigo Bank, but it's all "sound and fury signifying nothing" from the Uniparty that is owned by the banks lock, stock, and barrel. Publication Date 08 July 2025

This week, Prime Minister Anthony "All the way with USA" Albanese endorsed Donald Trump's illegal, immoral, and unprovoked military attack on Iran, even though it was against international law, the US constitution, the Trump administration's own intelligence, and Trump's promise to US voters. Albanese has failed, embarrassingly, to live up to the standard set by Labor leader Simon Crean who defied enormous political pressure to lead Labor to oppose the Iraq war, and was later vindicated.

In just a few months, Albanese has become a pathetic supplicant to Trump, kissing his feet on tariffs by offering him rare earth minerals and our pool of superannuation to invest in America, and taking back the Port of Darwin to most likely give to a predatory American investment company associated with the Pentagon.

Dan Duggan

Especially shocking is what Albanese is doing to an innocent Australian citizen and his family, on Trump's behalf. Albanese has kept former US Navy Top Gun pilot-turned Australian citizen Dan Duggan in prison now for 31 months, 20 months in solitary confinement, despite Duggan having broken no Australian laws (indeed, he's never been charged with a crime in his life). Duggan has been subject to appalling treatment in prison, including:

- exposure to violent, mentally disturbed prisoners;
 - exposure to cold weather with only one blanket for warmth; and
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- discriminatory restrictions on mail, communications, visitors, and contact with the media that don't apply to the convicted criminals with whom he is incarcerated.

What has this got to do with Trump?

Following his honourable discharge from the US Navy, Dan Duggan moved to Australia in 2002 to marry an Australian woman. After living in Australia for 10 years, with an Australian wife, Australian children, and an Australian business, Dan became a naturalised Australian on Australia Day, 26 January 2012, relinquishing his US citizenship. Later in 2012 he did what thousands of ex-servicemen do, by using his skills to provide flight training to a South African test pilot school, where some of the students were Chinese. A manager of the South African school has confirmed to the Australian Citizens Party that the United States knew of the training *at the time*; in fact, some officials from the US embassy in South Africa visited the school to observe the training.

So why did it take until 2017—five years later!—for the US Department of Justice to impanel a secret Grand Jury to indict Dan Duggan for breaching the US *Export of Arms Control Act* by providing training (which is the first time this act has been extended to “training”, not just selling hardware)? Because 2017 was the first year of Donald Trump's first presidency, and he brought to power with him extremist neoconservative war hawks whose agenda was provoking a war with China, including Iraq war criminal John Bolton, religious fanatic Mike Pompeo who wants Armageddon and openly pushes Taiwan to provoke a war, and exposed fraudster Peter Navarro who advised Trump to whack tariffs on Australia. These extremists shaped an anti-China agenda in the Trump White House, which led to the decision to make an example of Dan Duggan.

Because he was living in China working as an airline consultant and running his Australian-themed bar business at the time of the 2017 indictment, Duggan wasn't arrested until ASIO lured him home in late 2022, with Albanese and Labor in government. Everything that has happened to the Duggans since is Albanese's responsibility.

His government has approved Duggan's extradition despite:

- Duggan not being a US citizen at the time of the alleged offense—no jurisdiction;
- Australia having no equivalent law to the US law Duggan is indicted under—no dual criminality (must be a crime in both countries), a legal prerequisite for any extradition; and
- the Australian law that is being cited to meet the dual criminality requirement having only been enacted in 2018—six years after the alleged offence—and thus being applied retrospectively against all principles of justice.



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Albanese's Attorney-General has the absolute power to deny a US extradition request outright, but instead former AG Mark Dreyfus bent over backwards to facilitate the US request. As a result of what Albanese is allowing to be done to the Duggan family at Trump's behest, they are financially broken, his six Australian children are traumatised and his younger children especially are suffering mental health-related conditions. If Dan Duggan were in a Chinese prison, he would be a *cause célèbre* in Australia and Penny Wong would be doing everything in her power to get him out. But he's being tortured in an Australian prison on behalf of the USA, and our government doesn't care that they are destroying the lives of the eight beautiful Australian citizens in the Duggan family.

Support the Duggans!

Dan Duggan faces Federal Court on 26 August to appeal his extradition. The Duggans have no money, the US has put a caveat on their property so they can't sell it to pay legal fees, and he doesn't qualify for legal aid (unlike all the rapists and murders he's in prison with)—while the Australian government is paying ALL of the US government's legal costs in this matter!

The Duggans need to raise \$300,000 in eight weeks. The only support they will get is from the Australian people who know that Albanese should not be doing Trump's dirty work against this family.

Click here to donate to Dan Duggan's legal fund:

<https://www.mycase.com.au/p/350423/free-dan-duggan>

Please share this information as widely as possible. Publication Date 08 July 2025

In many ways former Labor Party prime minister Paul Keating is a political giant compared with his timid successors, but his understandable desire to defend his legacy has blinded him to the consequences of his banking policies, especially the privatisation of the Commonwealth Bank, the People's Bank.

This week Keating felt compelled to convince *Australian Financial Review* journalists that he deserves credit for CBA being the first Australian company to break through the \$300 billion stock market valuation mark, due to the surge in its share price this year to \$180.



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"I made the Commonwealth into a real bank", he told James Eyers and Jonathon Shapiro in the 16 June *AFR*. "The bank was flying on one wing when I became treasurer. I regard building CBA as a major achievement."

Then he hasn't been paying attention.

AFR usefully contrasted Keating's pronouncements on the Commonwealth Bank to current Labor PM Anthony Albanese's comment on CBA in an August 2023 podcast with Neil Mitchell.

"I think there is a role for state-owned enterprises in competing, in keeping the private sector a bit honest", Albanese said. "I wouldn't have sold the Commonwealth Bank, probably, still, going back. I think that there would have been better behaviour by the big banks had there been a public instrumentality there competing with it."

"Really?" Mitchell asked. "You reckon the banks would have been better behaved if you had a state-owned bank?"

Albanese shot back: "You would have had the opportunity to use that competitive tension of a bank that had more of a social licence, if you like, to operate."

Spot on.

We can assess the two views by what happened following the final privatisation of CBA in 1996. The privatised CBA under David Murray led the Big Four banks down a path Keating foolishly calls "a spirit of innovation", but which changed the basic model of banking, from lending that helps customers and businesses buy assets and grow their wealth, to:

- gouging customers with high fees on everything;
- pressuring staff to pester customers to buy unnecessary products, on which they could charge more fees;
- piling into mortgage lending above all else, driving up house prices to unaffordable levels;
- dropping lending standards and engaging in predatory lending practices to lure more people into pushing up the housing market;
- closing branches *en masse* and laying off thousands of staff, denying customers basic face-to-face service (in 1999, as a second-term MP, Albanese participated in the first Parliamentary inquiry into the devastating impact of regional bank branch closures that followed CBA's privatisation, called "Money too far away"); and more.



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Without having to compete with a public bank that existed to serve the people, private banking misconduct became so egregious, leading to hundreds of thousands of bank victims, that it forced the Turnbull government to call the 2018 banking royal commission.

In his final report, Commissioner Hayne concluded:

“Like any commercial enterprise, banks seek to maximise profit. ... That measure has been justified as being in the interests of shareholders and, because superannuation funds hold bank shares, as being in the interests of all Australians. But there being little threat of failure of the enterprise, *and there being little competitive pressure*, pursuit of profit has trumped consideration of how the profit is made. The banks have gone to the edge of what is permitted, and too often beyond that limit, in pursuit of profit. And they have gone beyond the limit:

- because they can; and
- *because they profit from the misconduct* that is described in this report.” (Emphasis added.)

The majority of bank victims will tell you that, seven years later, they feel the royal commission may as well not have happened—aside from a few attempts to implement Commissioner Hayne’s recommendations, the banks have continued on their profit-gouging ways, looking for new and more sophisticated ways to do so.

One major way has been their massive push to do away with cash and force customers into digital banking and transacting, from which they have been able to rake in billions in unequal surcharges, while exposing their customers to industrial-scale digital scamming.

The banks’ clearly coordinated strategy included the third massive wave of branch closures since CBA’s privatisation: from 2017 onwards, they shut down more than 2,000 branches, including more than 800 in regional Australia, and ripped out more than 8,000 ATMs.

This led to a crisis in regional banking services, which triggered the 2023-24 Senate inquiry into regional bank closures, at which the Australian Citizens Party (ACP) was able to testify in the December 2023 hearing that the solution to the crisis was re-establishing a public bank, like the original Commonwealth Bank, that would force the Big Four banks to compete on providing customers a real service (the ACP promoted the post office bank model of a public bank).

The ACP’s proposed solution is exactly what PM Albanese said a public bank should do in his comments to Neil Mitchell four months earlier.



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In their May 2024 final report, the Senators on the inquiry also found themselves in agreement with the prime minister, unanimously recommending the Albanese government appoint an expert panel to assess the viability of establishing another public bank, including the postal bank model.

So, history has shown Albanese, not Keating, to be right, but that is not enough.

Right or wrong, love him or hate him, Paul Keating was a decisive political leader, who pushed through his policy reforms.

Anthony Albanese has the benefit of a major Senate inquiry recommending a policy solution that is in agreement with his stated position supporting a public bank, but so far he has done nothing about it.

Australia desperately needs this solution, but does Albanese have the courage to act? Publication Date 08 July 2025

Pro-US propagandists seek to use Cheng Lei's experience to further demonise China, but Australia's torture and abuse of innocent citizen Dan Duggan at Washington's behest lays bare their hypocrisy.

Last night, 3 June, Sky News aired its documentary "Cheng Lei: My Story", about Australian journalist Cheng Lei's three years in prison in China and eventual release.

By her own account, Cheng Lei's experience was appalling, including:

- Upon arrest she spent three days in a so-called "dry cell", which has no toilet and only a bucket, instead of the maximum 24 hours that prisoners are supposed to be kept in such cells, where she was subject to prisoners in adjacent cells smearing excrement all over the walls;
- 20 months—600 days—in solitary confinement, which Cheng Lei's colleague in the Australian Wrongful and Arbitrary Detention Alliance (AWADA), Kylie Moore-Gilbert, described as a deliberate "form of torture".

Actually, apologies for the mix-up, but these horrific experiences were not on the Sky News documentary; they are some of the experiences of innocent Australian citizen Dan Duggan, who has broken no Australian laws, at the hands of Australian authorities acting on behalf of the United



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States.

All Australians should have immense sympathy for Cheng Lei and what she has experienced—including solitary confinement for nearly six months—but by now they should also detect propaganda when they see it.

In this case, the propaganda is not telling Cheng Lei's story; the propaganda, not surprisingly by the utterly shameless masters of anti-China propaganda Sky News, is the message that "authoritarian" China is uniquely evil, while Australia and the United States are the paragons of human rights, democracy, freedom, and virtue.

The real story is that two decent Australians, Cheng Lei and Dan Duggan, are victims of global geopolitical tensions, in which Australia is stuck between shifting tectonic plates and its citizens are being trapped and crushed.

Cheng Lei deserves the sympathy of all Australians, but where is the national sympathy for Dan Duggan?

As a nation we are in dangerous territory where the prevailing view is that it is only bad if China does it.

Two examples from the Cheng Lei documentary illustrate this.

First, Sky showed footage of former Australian Ambassador to China Graham Fletcher, who advocated for Cheng Lei in prison, making a public statement from outside her trial—from which he had been excluded on the grounds that it was a national security case—to the effect that Australia can have no confidence in a process that is conducted in secret.

Really? Ask Witness K, Witness J, and Witness K's lawyer former ACT Attorney-General Bernard Collaery (also Dan Duggan's lawyer) about secret trials in Australia.

If you haven't heard of these cases, look them up, but be warned—you may no longer believe your country stands for transparency and fair treatment if you do.

Second, Sky's narrative to explain why China arrested and detained Cheng Lei for three years is that it was China's way of getting back at Australia over the Morrison government's hostile shift against China during COVID in 2020. Given that China had many options against Australia, including the



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trade restrictions that it used, that explanation seems unlikely. *If* the reason was retaliation, there was another, more likely event that China may have been responding to, however, but Sky chose not to mention it. That was the secret ASIO raids on four Chinese journalists working for Chinese media in Sydney in June 2020. These were raids conducted in secret, kept secret by the Australian media, and not revealed to the Australian public until September 2020, and even then, only revealed by the Chinese government, not the Australia authorities or media.

What does it say about Australia's system that our secret police can raid foreign journalists and it be kept secret for months, including by the media?

Cheng Lei was arrested two months *after* these secret ASIO raids.

As we celebrate Cheng Lei's freedom—free Dan Duggan!

If Cheng Lei was arrested for being connected to Australia, Dan Duggan was definitely arrested for doing business with China.

Like many ex-military personnel, especially many ex-US military, he used his skills in the private sector to train other pilots at a South African flight academy, including Chinese civilian pilots, in 2010 and 2012 at a time when no reasonable person was talking about war with China.

Indicted by a secret grand jury in Washington DC in 2017, and lured by ASIO to Australia in October 2022 when he was arrested, Dan is a victim of Australia's unbalanced and unfair extradition treaty with the USA.

One of the foundation principles of extradition is dual criminality—the alleged crime must be a crime in both countries—but Australia's extradition treaty with the US says dual criminality applies *at the time of the extradition request*.

The Australian law that is being stretched beyond its intended use to satisfy the requirement of dual criminality was not passed until 2018—as this is six years after the alleged offense, it should not apply, but because it is *before* the 2022 extradition request, the extradition treaty allows it to be applied anyway.

This is not justice, this is a stitch-up, and a wonderful Australian family is suffering terribly as a result.



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The authorities have denied Dan Duggan legal aid, so his family is fighting his case and trying to live off donations.

The Duggans tried to sell Saffrine's rural property under duress to pay for his legal defence, but the USA got the Australian courts to freeze the sale.

The six Duggan children have been denied their father for two and a half years, and the youngest children especially are suffering psychologically.

Even under the unfair extradition treaty Australia still has the absolute right to refuse an extradition, but former Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus put his thumb on the scale to assist the Americans in various ways, and finally approved the extradition in December under the cover of Christmas.

Dan Duggan is desperately appealing the AG's decision, which likely won't be heard until August, dragging out his incarceration even longer.

This grave injustice against an Australian family is happening right now in Australia, not two years ago in China.

All Australians should celebrate Cheng Lei's freedom, but likewise demand justice and freedom for Dan Duggan and his long-suffering family. Publication Date 08 July 2025

John Lander is right! In a 27 May, post-election interview on the Australian Citizens Party's *Citizens Insight* YouTube program, Australia's former Ambassador to Iran and deputy ambassador to China issued a stark warning that despite the election returning Anthony Albanese, who has successfully stabilised Australia's relationship with China, Australia is actually edging closer to war with China. Lander's reasoning, elaborated in the interview, is that Australia's continued military build-up with the United States, to the point where the USA now effectively occupies Australia militarily, is pushing us relentlessly towards war with China, no matter how politely the Australia-China trade relationship is managed. In less than a week, Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles confirmed John Lander's warning.

Click here to watch [Citizens Insight—John Lander: Election edges Australia closer to war](#)



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At the annual Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore, Marles may as well have genuflected to US Defence Secretary Peter Hegseth, the former Fox News TV host who sports tattoos of insignia of medieval Christian crusaders dedicated to vanquishing infidels. Hegseth launched into an incendiary but typically ignorant attack on China in his speech: "We know that Xi Jinping has ordered his military to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027", he claimed. "Let me be clear: any attempt by Communist China to conquer Taiwan would result in devastating consequences for the Indo-Pacific and the world. We are not going to sugarcoat it. The threat China poses is real. And it could be imminent." He then met with Marles and demanded Australia increase its military spending from the current level of 2 per cent of GDP, or \$56 billion per year, to 3.5 per cent of GDP, which would be \$90 billion per year. (As a percentage of the federal budget, the current spending is 6.5 per cent, while the higher level being demanded would be more than 10 per cent).

To be clear, at no time has China or its president Xi Jinping ever said China will invade Taiwan by 2027, or will be ready to invade. This is entirely a US "intelligence" construct, like Iraqi WMDs. Even the US magazine *Defence News* devoted a report on 7 May 2024 to the origins of the claim that China is preparing to invade by that date, acknowledging that Xi didn't set such a deadline. So how did the deputy PM of Australia, for whose country China is the most important trading partner and which stands to lose the most from a war, respond to the tattooed ex-TV host's baseless claims and demands? Exactly as John Lander predicted: Marles demonstrated Australia was in lockstep with the US escalation.

Marles claimed to reporters at Shangri La that "what we have seen from China is the single biggest increase in military capability and build-up in conventional sense, by any country since the end of the Second World War. ... What we want to see is strategic transparency and strategic reassurance be provided by China, and an understanding of why it is needed to have such an extraordinary military build-up."

Marles is pretending China's military build-up is proactive, when in reality it is reactive. How else is China supposed to respond to America and its allies after they've lied to invade countries and wage wars for 20 years, killing millions of people, and are now obsessing about China as their next and greatest "threat" while heavily arming hundreds of military bases surrounding it?

In terms of military spending, Marles said that "we are calibrating our defence spending to the strategic moment that we need to meet, so we are up for the conversation, and the American position has been clear and it's understandable, and that's a conversation that we will continue to have with the US". PM Anthony Albanese later contradicted Marles, but this episode shows the US



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anti-China war agenda is still driving policy in Canberra.

If we hope to avert what should be an unthinkable war, Australians should hear, and heed, John Lander's warning.

Click here to watch [Citizens Insight—John Lander: Election edges Australia closer to war](#) Publication Date 08 July 2025

Yesterday, a three-judge appeal panel of the ACT Supreme Court dismissed government whistleblower David McBride's appeal against his conviction and excessive sentence for leaking documents that exposed Australian war crimes.

The decision continues the shameful reality that the only person in jail in relation to the 39 war crimes in Afghanistan—which the Australian government has acknowledged and paid compensation for—is the whistleblower who revealed them, not the perpetrators or their commanding officers.

Although the McBride team intend to appeal to the High Court, it is clear this is primarily a political matter, not judicial, and therefore the only real pathway to justice for this Australian hero is for the Albanese government to do the right thing and free him.

All concerned Austalians should phone and write to newly appointed Attorney-General Michelle Rowland to demand she reverse her predecessor Mark Dreyfus's terrible errors, and free David McBride—see details below.

Smokescreen of lies

David McBride is in prison for one reason: then Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus refused to use his powers to discontinue the prosecution on grounds that McBride's actions revealed information that was in the public interest.

Dreyfus repeatedly claimed that he could only use such power in "exceptional circumstances"—a formulation that could be interpreted any way he wished—but as former Senator Rex Patrick exposed in a 23 September 2023 article for Michael West Media, that wasn't true.



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Nowhere in the *Judiciary Act 1903* are the AG's powers to discontinue unjust prosecutions qualified by the words "exceptional circumstances".

Rather, Section 71 states: *"When any person is under commitment upon a charge of an indictable offence against the laws of the Commonwealth, the Attorney-General or such other person as the Governor-General appoints in that behalf may decline to proceed further in the prosecution, and may, if the person is in custody, by warrant under his or her hand direct the discharge of the person from custody, and he or she shall be discharged accordingly."*

This means Dreyfus could have dropped the charges against McBride before the trial; it also means Attorney-General Michelle Rowland has the unqualified power to release him from prison now.

However, the Australian people will have to demand it.

Suspiciously, the judges in their ruling yesterday made reference to McBride's motive for leaking the material upon which ABC based its report "The Afghan Files" in 2017.

They claimed that he wasn't motivated to expose war crimes, but rather to cover them up.

This is a narrative concocted by the mainstream media between the time of McBride's trial in November 2023, and his sentencing in May 2024, with one purpose: create a smokescreen to cover the government's complicity in suppressing the real truth about the war crimes.

ABC Four Corners and its disingenuous reporter Grace Tobin, and ABC reporter Dan Oakes, to whom David McBride leaked the Afghan Files, treacherously threw McBride under a bus to fabricate a narrative that he wanted to cover up war crimes.

The truth was loudly proclaimed by McBride from the very beginning, including in an [interview](#) with Citizens Party Research Director Robert Barwick in 2022: As an army lawyer responsible for interpreting the rules of engagement, he became concerned that some soldiers were being scapegoated with false war crimes charges, to over-compensate for real war crimes that were not just covered up by superior officers, but whose perpetrators had been decorated.

McBride's explanation is not hard to understand, but the narrative-makers in the media have deliberately run a black-and-white version of reality to create a smokescreen for the government.

The AG Mark Dreyfus revealed the government was invested in this narrative when he was



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confronted by a constituent outside of his electorate office in Mordialloc in Melbourne in early 2024, who asked him what he was going to do to protect McBride, who is a whistleblower.

"Is he?" Dreyfus replied, thus letting it slip that the government was invested in this narrative.

Now, with yesterday's ruling, it is clear that this confected narrative has influenced the judges against McBride.

Remember, one of the most outrageous aspects of the McBride case is that on the evening of the very day that McBride was sentenced, Defence Minister Richard Marles released a report which he had been sitting on since a fortnight before McBride's trial in November 2023.

Richard Marles had sat on the report because it largely vindicated David McBride's driving motivation to hold the top brass to account.

The report of the Afghanistan Inquiry Implementation Oversight Panel, chaired by former Inspector General of Intelligence and Security Dr Vivienne Thom, said the Panel "did not agree with the Brereton Inquiry's view that some accountability and responsibility could not fall on the most senior officers."

Most shamefully, the Panel's 8 November 2023 cover letter to Richard Marles made it clear that there was no reason for the Minister not to make the report public, writing that it had "been advised by Defence that there is no need or justification for this report to be classified".

Marles only released this report, in response to a request by Senator Malcolm Roberts, on the evening of the day McBride was sentenced.

By sitting on it, he negatively influenced McBride's trial and sentencing by denying information that potentially mitigated McBride's actions.

Combined with Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus refusing to acknowledge McBride's leak was in the public interest, the Albanese government is politically culpable in this whistleblower being in jail while the known wrongdoers walk free.

What you can do

Call and/or email your local MP and new AG Michelle Rowland to demand she use her power to



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reverse this grave injustice and free David McBride.

Electorate office: (02) 9671 4780

Canberra office: (02) 6277 7300

Email portal: <https://ministers.ag.gov.au/hon-michelle-rowland-mp/contact> Publication Date 08 July 2025

The 24th of May is the first anniversary of the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport (RARAT) Committee's report from its inquiry into bank closures in regional Australia.

According to Parliament's website, "Government responses to committee reports *are required* within three months of a report being tabled."

However, 12 months after the bank closures inquiry report was tabled, the Albanese government is yet to issue an official response.

The Australian Citizens Party (ACP) today called on Treasurer Jim Chalmers to respond to the Senate inquiry's bipartisan recommendations that include:

- Designating access to financial services and cash an essential service;
- Appointing an expert panel to assess the possibility of establishing a government bank, including as a postal bank;
- Making the Banking Code of Practice mandatory.

"We know these recommendations enraged the Big Four banks and their lobbyists in the Australian Banking Association (ABA)", ACP Research Director Robert Barwick observed.

"Is this why the government hasn't responded to the report—out of fear of upsetting the banks?"

Comprehensive inquiry

The Senate inquiry into regional bank branch closures showed Parliament is capable of working



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effectively to examine and address important issues.

Sparked by the epidemic of bank branch closures in regional towns, which had reached crisis proportions, the 15-month inquiry became one of the biggest probes in the previous parliament, receiving more than 600 submissions and holding 13 public hearings all across regional Australia, from Launceston in Tasmania to Tom Price in northern WA.

It had instant results: Westpac quickly reversed six branch closures under the pressure of transparency, and CBA soon announced a three-year moratorium on branch closures.

Committee chair Senator Matt Canavan commented it was the most successful inquiry he had ever participated in, and other participating senators noted that without the inquiry, they would never have understood the damage the banks were inflicting on regional Australia.

Over the course of 13 hearings, the participating senators went from generally giving the banks the benefit of the doubt that in closing branches they were making sound commercial decisions, to ridiculing and castigating the banks for not living up to their social license by providing services to their customers.

The inquiry proved that the banks and ABA were lying when they claimed that customers preferred digital banking and didn't use branches anymore.

The consistent message from every community that testified in the 13 hearings was that they needed face-to-face banking services and access to deposit and withdraw cash, and that the closure of branches was devastating to their local community and economy.

From this comprehensive inquiry process, the Committee produced very strong, bipartisan recommendations that reflected the detailed knowledge the Senators had acquired.

Given that Labor Senators also participated—including the late Senator Linda White, who brilliantly grilled the banks and ABA in the hearings—and endorsed the recommendations, the Labor government should have embraced the final report and moved quickly to implement its findings.

Instead, the government has ignored its obligation to respond in 90 days, while fiddling around the edges with policy thought bubbles, including a bank levy to subsidise regional branch services, a half-baked cash acceptance mandate that exempts 90 per cent of businesses, and an extended regional branch closures moratorium that simply kicks the can down the road to 2027.



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Robert Barwick, who was the only person to attend every hearing of the inquiry, vouches for the committee's recommendations.

"The inquiry nailed the banks and its recommendations will fix the mess they have caused, but only if the government has the courage to take the banks on", he said.

"The government should respect the process and respond." Publication Date 08 July 2025

New Attorney-General Michelle Rowland has the opportunity to start with a clean slate by undoing the bad decisions of her predecessor.

All concerned Australians who value justice and integrity should contact AG Rowland to tell her to:

- Free innocent US scapegoat Dan Duggan;
- Free unjustly imprisoned David McBride and properly protect whistleblowers;
- Overhaul the impotent National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) to give it real teeth.

As Attorney-General, Rowland's predecessor Mark Dreyfus shamed Australia by his handling of these issues.

He bent over backwards to accommodate US demands to extradite Australian citizen Dan Duggan despite the charges not meeting the basic legal test of dual criminality, and he approved Duggan's extradition on 23 December 2024 under cover of Christmas.

Dreyfus chose to continue David McBride's prosecution instead of declaring that his leak of documents that exposed war crimes in Afghanistan was in the public interest.

And he oversaw the establishment of the NACC, which was made deliberately weak and ineffective such that it has functioned more as a fig leaf for corruption than a corruption watchdog.

What will the new Attorney-General do?

The Australian Citizens Party (ACP) is urging all concerned Australians to contact Ms Rowland's office to express public support for her revisiting these issues.



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Most urgent is the case of Dan Duggan, who has now been in prison for more than two and a half years despite having broken no Australian laws.

Dan Duggan has been cruelly separated from his wife Saffrine and six children, a beautiful Australian family who are being destroyed simply because of their government's political cowardice in not being willing to stand up to US bullying.

Now that Albanese has defeated the two most pro-US, anti-China Liberal leaders, will he finally grow a spine and do something for this family?

Dan Duggan is a former US Navy "top gun" pilot, who served with distinction before his honourable discharge in the early 2000s, when he married an Australian woman and moved to Tasmania.

On Australia Day 2012 he became an Australian citizen, and later that year he did what thousands of ex-military personnel do by going to South Africa to make some extra money training pilots, including Chinese pilots.

At the time, nobody in Australia except extremist neoconservatives like Michael Danby were talking about war with China, and indeed two years later Chinese President Xi Jinping addressed the Australian Parliament.

Duggan's former superior officer, retired US Marines Colonel Ben Hancock, has given him a glowing character reference: "He is a good man of character, a loyal citizen, pilot, patriot, who's simply trying to make a living doing what he likes to do flying aeroplanes", Hancock said to ABC in 2023. "[I]t's not his job as an instructor to vet the students."

Five years after his stint as a trainer in South Africa, the new Trump administration, dominated by deranged anti-China war hawks like Mike Pompeo and John Bolton, established a secret grand jury that indicted Duggan, who was then living and working in China as a consultant to the commercial airline industry.

Upon his return to Australia in October 2022, the Australian Federal Police and ASIO arrested him on the USA's behalf, and he has been in prison ever since.

With his clean record and character references, the Australian government could have allowed Duggan to fight his extradition from home, under house arrest, but instead they have subjected him to cruel incarceration, often in solitary confinement.



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Remember, he has broken no Australian laws.

What you can do

Concerned Australians should contact AG Michelle Rowland to demand to know why the government is treating an Australian family in this cruel way.

Demand to know why her predecessor approved his extradition for charges under an American law that had no equivalent in Australia, in breach of the legal extradition principle of dual criminality—it must be a crime in both countries—and whether she will reverse that decision.

Demand to know why Dan Duggan is not being allowed to live with his family under house arrest while he is appealing his extradition.

While you are at it, tell her office she should also act to reverse the injustice against David McBride—who has just marked 365 days in prison—and overhaul the NACC.

Contact Michelle Rowland at her electorate office:

Telephone: (02) 9671 4780

Email: Michelle.Rowland.MP@aph.gov.au

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Anthony Albanese's new Communications Minister Anika Wells is now the minister responsible for Australia Post.

Will she allow Australia Post CEO Paul Graham to push ahead with closing as many post offices as he can, robbing communities all over Australia of an essential service?

Or will she do what her predecessors didn't, and intervene to save post offices and the communities they serve?

That's the question all Aussies should be asking the new minister and the Albanese government as



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she takes up her new role.

Post offices are in the category of things Joni Mitchell sang about in Big Yellow Taxi: "You don't know what you've got till it's gone."

We all take them for granted, but we all need them at one time or another, some of us quite regularly, especially to withdraw money from our accounts at the banks that have closed their branches.

The local post office is Australia's front counter, providing many essential services, including banking.

Two thirds of Australia's 4,200 post offices are small businesses, run under license to Australia Post.

For years the licensed post offices have warned that Australia Post management is driving them into bankruptcy.

Except for the five years of Christine Holgate, whom licensees called "the best CEO Australia Post ever had", Australia Post CEOs have pushed the postal service away from its core responsibility for delivering the mail, into competing for the growing parcels business driven by e-commerce.

While the volume of letters has declined, they are still very important, whereas the motivation to undermine letters and compete on parcels has been privatisation by stealth.

Current CEO Paul Graham has made it clear he wants to reduce the number of post offices to the bare minimum of 4,000 required by law, which means another few hundred communities are going to lose their local post offices.

He has also lobbied the previous minister to ditch the legislated community service obligation so he can close many more.

Ex-Woolworths logistics manager Paul Graham doesn't want post offices serving every town; he wants parcels depots on back streets staffed by teenagers.

The Albanese government has not agreed to this, and no politician in their right mind would ever agree to stripping thousands of towns and suburbs of such an essential service, but the problem is so far Albanese and previous minister Michelle Rowland have done nothing to stop him.



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They have ignored the pleas of the Licensed Post Office Group (LPOG), which represents the interests of licensees, and which has warned that Graham and his management team are driving their businesses into financial disaster, by removing more and more of the services they provide which keep customers coming in the door.

LPOG fear that Australia Post will achieve its goals of closing post offices by pushing many licensees to close their businesses and simply not replacing them.

LPOG support the win-win policy solution proposed by the Australian Citizens Party: establishing an Aussie Post Bank, a government bank operating in post offices.

The Aussie Post Bank would take on the Big Four private banking behemoths, injecting much-needed competition in the banking system, and serve all the towns those banks have abandoned by closing branches.

The revenue from banking would keep Australia Post profitable and make individual post offices financially viable.

Ex-CEO Christine Holgate was pursuing this solution when Scott Morrison brutally removed her in 2020 for the Cartier watches scandal, which was partly a Labor Party beat-up led by Michelle Rowland and Anthony Albanese.

Albanese has since apologised to Christine Holgate for his role, but he has done nothing to avert the looming disaster at Australia Post that he helped to set in train.

It now falls to Anika Wells to save this essential service—will she do her job?

What you can do

Call and or email incoming Minister Anika Wells' electorate office to ask her staff to pass on your question: Will she save the post offices by supporting an Aussie Post bank?

Ph: (07) 3266 8244

Email: Anika.Wells.MP@aph.gov.au Publication Date 08 July 2025