

SEP (Australia) public meeting: Join strike action by nurses! Form rank-and-file committees. Lives over profit

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
7 February 2022

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) invites all health workers, students, teachers and workers in all industries to attend an online public meeting on Saturday February 12 at 4 p.m. (AEDT). [Click here to register.](#)

The meeting will discuss the way forward for striking nurses following the call by the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA) for a vote to hold a statewide four-hour strike on February 15.

The SEP warns nurses and all health workers: The last thing this union wants is a state-wide strike by nurses that will focus attention on their unsustainable conditions and workloads which the union has presided over. It will do everything it can to either call it off or limit it entirely.

The NSWNMA has only called for the strike vote because it can no longer contain the growing anger and frustration among health workers over the disastrous conditions in the health system as the pandemic surges out of control in Australia.

The disaster facing health workers, teachers, students and the entire population is the result of the “let it rip” strategy of all governments, Labor and Liberal. They have removed even the most basic public health measures to contain the virus.

Across the country, 3,914 people are hospitalised for COVID-19, with 2,099 in NSW alone. January was the worst month of mass infection and death since the pandemic began, with 2.15 million confirmed cases, meaning 8.6 percent of the country’s population caught it in a single month, and 1,519 confirmed deaths.

All this occurred before the schools began reopening across the country. Within a week of reopening, thousands of children and educators have been infected.

The stage has been set for the mass infection of students, including unvaccinated children, which will spread the virus to parents and teachers. Educators now face the same catastrophe as the health workers in the hospitals.

The reopening of schools was not carried out in the interests of the education of children but to force their parents back into unsafe workplaces.

Letting the virus rip has caused a crisis in the already overrun hospital system. In Victoria last month a “code brown” was called for the first time in the state’s history.

Similar conditions exist in NSW, including the postponement of elective surgeries, and health workers have been called back to work, not only from leave, but from COVID-19 isolation.

Nurses have reported that COVID patients are being admitted to non-COVID wards, effectively creating the conditions for the virus to spread throughout the hospitals. Massive staff shortages and increased workloads are pushing hospital staff to the limit and untrained nurses are being forced into ICU wards.

The strike vote called by the NSWNMA is designed to limit and constrain the mass anger of nurses to the narrow confines of appeals to the Perrottet government for unspecified improvements to nurse-patient ratios and pay. Like all premiers in the bipartisan National Cabinet, Dominic Perrottet leads a government that deliberately advances profits over lives.

The union isolates the action to only nurses who are members of the union. It excludes doctors, paramedics, orderlies, cleaners and other hospital workers, as well as teachers and logistics workers, who are likewise forced back to work, under intolerable conditions with

threat of infection.

The proposed strike does not demand the reversal of the very “let it rip” policies that have caused this crisis. This is because the unions did not oppose the reopening drive throughout the pandemic in the first place!

The pandemic has proven that capitalism is unable to meet the most basic needs of society as everything, including lives, is subordinated to profit. Epidemiologists and the experiences in China, New Zealand and Australia have proven that a coordinated program of vaccines and public health measures would eliminate the virus. But capitalist corporations will not accept any impediment to their wealth and profits. What is needed to stop the virus is mobilisation of the international working class, based on a political fight for the elimination of COVID-19.

Nurses can't be left to fight alone!

The SEP calls for nurses to unite with other healthcare workers, as well as teachers, educators, logistics workers across Australia and internationally. Health workers must form independent Rank-and-File Committees, outside the shackles of the trade unions, to coordinate and expand their struggle.

We urge you to attend our meeting and participate in this vital discussion. [Click here to register.](#)



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