

Australian doctors support Boeing workers' strike

Our correspondents
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A group of Australian doctors has issued the following statement in support of American workers at aircraft manufacturer Boeing, who are currently on strike in the states of Washington, Oregon and California.

The strike of some 33,000 Boeing machinists began in a revolt against the leadership of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), which endorsed and tried to force through a pro-company tentative agreement. Workers walked out just after rejecting by almost 95 percent a sellout contract backed by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) leadership and voting by 96 percent to strike. Workers have formed their own independent rank-and-file committee to take forward this struggle.

The doctors' group was developed, independent of the trade unions and medical associations, when a number of doctors who publicly opposed Israel's genocide in Gaza came under attack from pro-Zionist elements. The medical authorities, doctors' medical associations and the health unions have not issued a single statement condemning the political bullying and victimisation of their members.

Several of those drafting this statement have been subjected to vexatious reporting to the Australian Health Practitioners Authority, Australia's principal medical regulatory body. These complaints called on the board to discipline and/or deregister medical professionals, falsely accusing them of antisemitism because they opposed the Gaza genocide.

To the Boeing Workers Rank-and-File Committee:

We are a group of Australian doctors who came together early this year to oppose the victimisation of medical professionals for speaking out against Israel's genocidal attacks on the Palestinian people in Gaza, and to fight against the Australian government's

attacks on the jobs, wages and living standards of all health workers.

Having learned of your struggle from the *World Socialist Web Site*, we met and decided to send a message of solidarity and salute the determined struggle you and 33,000 other Boeing machinists are waging for better wages and working conditions.

Boeing management, which has abandoned basic safety standards in passenger airplane manufacturing, wants you to pay for its crimes and profits by imposing poverty-level wages and slashing hard-won conditions.

Your overwhelming rejection of Boeing's threats and the sell-out deals endorsed by the International Association of Machinists (IAM) leadership demonstrates the potential strength of the working class and is a powerful blow against this giant corporation's war profits, which fuel the US war machine.

Above all, your decisions to establish a rank-and-file group, independent of the union bureaucracy and your October 3 statement—"Boeing machinists must unite with East Coast dockworkers to defend jobs and stop world war!"—are an inspiration and point the way forward for class-conscious workers everywhere.

We fully endorse all your demands, including for job security, healthcare and pensions, work safety, and for a 50 percent pay increase with a cost-of-living adjustment to overcome a decade of price rises in Seattle—a city just as expensive as Sydney or Melbourne in Australia.

To advance these demands, you must take your struggle out of the hands of the union bureaucracy and link up with striking workers at Eaton Aerospace and 5,000 fellow machinists at Textron Aviation, who have also rejected a company-IAM sellout contract.

While the International Longshoremen's Association leadership has jumped to the demands of the Biden

administration and shut down the East Coast dockers strike, nothing is resolved. The union's betrayal is yet another indication that workers must organise independently of this bureaucratic apparatus.

Two years ago, Biden, hailed by the trade union bureaucrats as the most "union-friendly" US president ever elected, and both parties in Congress outlawed a strike by 110,000 railroaders and forced them to accept a contract they had voted down. At the time, they claimed that a railroad strike would threaten the economy and "national interests." It will repeat these claims in defence of Boeing because your strike threatens Washington's shipment of weapons to Israel, Ukraine and other countries.

You also face the IAM leadership, who never wanted this strike to go ahead and refuse to bring the full resources of their \$300 million assets to your aid. The current \$250 weekly strike pay is abysmal and intended to starve you back to work.

While you face ruthless enemies, you have even more powerful friends—the American and international working class. Your rank-and-file committee has emphasised that victory is only possible if you mobilise and harness this power.

Were it not for your decision to establish your rank-and-file committee and the articles published on the World Socialist Web Site, we would never have learnt of your struggle. Fearful that your industrial action will encourage Australian workers to take similar action, the corporate media in Australia and the trade unions have not reported your strike.

Our group is working to raise awareness among health workers of your struggle, its international significance, and the need for them to support your fight. Workers in every country must unite and view your struggle as their own.

Over the last four years, Australian workers have suffered one of the sharpest declines in real wages of all the world's wealthy countries. The rising cost of living and below-inflation wage deals have trapped working-class families in poverty, one pay cheque away from destitution.

The gross underfunding of public healthcare has led to patients waiting years for surgery, dying in ambulances, or being unable to get essential lifesaving treatments like dialysis. Like their counterparts internationally, Australian politicians cried crocodile

tears. They hailed the sacrifices made by health workers at the start of COVID, only to deny us wage rises, safe working hours, or PPE to prevent staff and patients from contracting COVID and other diseases.

As for ourselves, we were compelled to form our group due to our opposition to the genocide in Gaza. As health workers, we believe that all human beings deserve to live in safety and dignity and be free of the horrors of war.

For our peaceful acts of speaking out against the genocide, a number of doctors and other health workers have been targeted by the medical regulator of Australia, AHPRA, which has threatened us with de-registration, which would mean we could lose our licences to practice, and be unable to work and earn a living.

Like Boeing workers, healthcare workers in Australia are fighting back. Just last month, 10,000 public hospital nurses and midwives went on strike in New South Wales, our most populous state, demanding wage rises above the insulting government offer of only 9.5 per cent over three years.

However, like Boeing workers, we confront unions that are responsible for imposing previous government cuts and are conspiring to force health workers to accept more austerity measures, attacks on working conditions and rights, and an even greater breakdown of public health.

Our struggles can only succeed if workers organise independently of the union bureaucracies and fight for a world where human need, not profit, is the priority.



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