

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Taiwan telecommunication workers demand wage rise

A small group of Chunghwa Telecom Workers' Union members set up a protest camp outside Chunghwa Telecom's office in Taipei City on December 5 after pay rise negotiations with the company broke down. The action followed a protest by 500 union members outside the communications ministry office on November 7 with their demands.

Workers want a monthly pay increase of \$NT7,500 (\$US231), monthly transport allowances increased by \$NT3,000 and guarantees that workers would not be forced to retire. The company said on its website that it expects 4,000 employees will resign within the next 10 years when they reach retirement age.

A union spokesman made the point that the labour act was revised in July to prevent employers from forcing workers to retire. He accused Chunghwa Telecom of delaying implementing the revised law by not proposing any meaningful plans to address the changes.

Chunghwa Telecom is 35 percent owned by the communications ministry and employed over 20,000 people in 2023.

India: Dock workers at 12 major government ports prepare for strike

The National Coordination Committee of the Major Port & Dock Workers Federations has called a strike for December 17 at 12 major government-owned ports. Workers are demanding that the government implement a wage agreement settled in September. In the lead-up to the strike workers held a nation-wide protest outside all port headquarters on December 5. The settled agreement included an 8.5 percent wage increase, service reforms and payment of pension benefits.

The unions deferred a strike planned for August 25 in anticipation of reaching an agreement. Union leaders said that strike preparation plans for December 17 would continue until the September settlement is implemented.

Telangana ASHA workers demonstrate for pay rise

ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) workers protested in Hyderabad near the Directorate of Medical Education on December 9.

They demanded that their wages be raised from 9,000 rupees (\$US106) to 18,000 rupees per month. This was an election promise of the ruling Congress state government.

Workers decided to protest after being told that the promised pay increase would be fulfilled in six months. Police attacked their protest and more than ten workers were arrested on charges of assaulting police.

Uttar Pradesh government bans anti-privatisation strike by power utility workers

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adhyanath passed a draconian Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) two days before power utility workers in the city of Varanasi planned to strike in opposition to privatisation. The enactment of ESMA made the strike illegal, forcing workers to resort to wearing black protest badges at work on December 10. The workers are organised under the Vidyut Karmchari Samyuka Sangharsh Samiti which did not take up a struggle to challenge the imposition of ESMA.

Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi workers demand permanent jobs and pay increase

Anganwadi (childcare) workers in Anantapur and Puttaparthi regions in Andhra Pradesh demonstrated on December 9 to demand a wage rise, permanent jobs, pensions and other retirement benefits. Workers were especially enraged about digitalisation of their work, saying that data collection is prioritised against being care providers.

Indira Gandhi Medical College contract workers protest delayed wages

Contract hospital workers from the Indira Gandhi Medical College (IGMC) in Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, protested management on December 8. The workers are cleaners, ward attendants, ECG operating staffs, canteen workers, paramedical workers and laundry workers. The Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) organised the protest.

A CITU spokesperson alleged there was a conspiracy by management to remove 150 workers. He claimed that the workers had not been paid wages for the last two months and had not been paid extra for additional workloads. CITU demanded that the contract workers be included in the

Employee Provident Fund, State Health Insurance, paid holidays, 8-hour day and that wages and entitlements be paid by the seventh of every month.

Pakistan: Sanitation workers in Narowal city strike over unpaid wages

Hundreds of workers from the Narowal Municipal Committee protested outside the administration office this week demanding immediate payment of three months' overdue wages. They chanted slogans against the committee and district administration.

"There's nothing left to eat at home and our children are starving," said Naeem, one of the protesting workers. "We can't pay electricity or gas bills and our children are falling ill due to the change in weather," he said.

The timing of the strike is especially critical, as workers highlighted their inability to buy clothes or shoes for their children ahead of Christmas celebrations. The protesters vowed to continue their strike until their demands are met.

Pakistan: Punjab sanitation workers oppose wage cuts

Scores of sanitary workers from the Faisalabad Waste Management Company (FWMC) staged a protest on the Dijkot Road, Toba Tek Singh city, against wage deductions by the new contractor. The workers blocked traffic for an hour by parking garbage containers on the road.

Speaking to reporters, workers said the new contractor had deducted 10 days' wages, citing training sessions during the initial days after operations were transferred from FWMC. Workers also demanded the timely payment of their December salaries before Christmas.

Qantas maintenance engineers strike for higher pay

Nearly 500 Qantas maintenance engineers stopped work at airports in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide on Friday in a dispute over wages and conditions. Negotiations for a new enterprise agreement have been dragging on since April. Their current agreement expired in June.

The workers are represented by the Qantas Engineers' Alliance (QEA), an umbrella for members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU), Australian Workers' Union (AWU) and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU).

The strike is a renewal of protected industrial action halted by the unions six weeks ago as an "expression of goodwill" in support of further negotiations. This had achieved nothing for the engineers except delaying industrial action in favour of company profits. The QEA says Qantas continues to refuse to change its initial offer of a 3 percent per annum wage rise in a three-year agreement.

Workers want a wage rise of 15 percent in the first year and 5 percent for every year thereafter, which they say will compensate for three and a half years of wage freezes agreed to by the unions during the COVID pandemic. The increase would boost their wages in line with the aviation industry standards.

Nurses and midwives at Healthscope's Prince of Wales private hospital in Sydney strike

Nurses and midwives from Healthscope's Prince of Wales private hospital in Sydney walked off the job in the morning on Wednesday in opposition to Healthscope's "insulting pay offer" in its proposed enterprise agreement. Their action followed a walkout by Healthscope nurses and midwives at two Healthscope hospitals, in Newcastle on November 21 and in Sydney in early November.

The New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA) is in dispute with the Canadian-based health provider Healthscope, which owns the hospitals. Negotiations for a new enterprise agreement have been ongoing since May. Nurses and midwives rejected Healthscope's pay increase offer of just 13.55 percent over three years.

The NSWNMA claims that nurses and midwives at Healthscope hospitals in NSW are paid 16 percent less than their colleagues in Queensland-based Healthscope hospitals. They also receive less annual, maternity and personal leave than if they were working in public sector hospitals. Healthscope is Australia's second-largest private hospital group with 38 hospitals across every state and territory.

The union is calling for an immediate 15 percent pay rise in line with the union's public sector pay claim, mandated nurse/midwife to patient ratios across all wards and units, night shift penalty rates increased from 15 percent to 30 percent and improved leave entitlements.

Coca-Cola factory workers in New South Wales walk out for better pay and conditions

Over 130 Electrical Trades Union (ETU) members from Coca-Cola's Northmead factory in Sydney walked off the job for 24 hours on Monday in opposition to the company's proposed enterprise agreement. The union accused Coca-Cola of trying to drive down wages and working conditions.

The ETU claimed that the workers are paid a lot less than workers at the nearby competitors Pepsi factory. Coca-Cola has a two-tiered wage system which the union said sees some workers being paid significantly less than co-workers doing the same job. As well as a pay increase in line with industry standard, workers want issues around rostering and progression through the company improved.

Ipswich City Council workers in Queensland strike over pay offer

About 200 workers from the Ipswich Waste Services and Ipswich City Council, in southwest Brisbane, have given notice that they planned to strike on Friday unless the council makes an improved pay offer in its proposed enterprise agreement. The workers are covered by the Australian Workers Union (AWU) and the Transport Workers Union.

Workers rejected council's offer of a pay increase of 12.73 percent over three years and transition to a 36.25-hour working week by July 1, 2026. An AWU spokesman claimed the offer would not stop the standard of living of members from "backsliding."

Workers want the new agreement to include a superannuation increase to match other council employees, along with a pay rise to keep up with "cost-of-living pressures" and allowances for working with dangerous poisons and chemicals.

GenesisCare cancer radiation therapists in Queensland walk out for higher pay

More than 80 radiation therapists, who treat cancer patients at privately-owned GenesisCare, walked off the job across Queensland on Tuesday and held simultaneous rallies in Brisbane, Hervey Bay and Rockhampton. Workers held placards saying, “Same Work Same Pay” and “PAY US the same as QLD HEALTH.”

The United Workers Union claimed GenesisCare radiation therapists are currently paid 30 percent less than their counterparts from Queensland Health. Workers are seeking pay parity in a new enterprise agreement.

Bowen Rail train drivers in Queensland commence industrial action for new work agreement

Over 40 members of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Engineers (AFULE) from the Bowen Rail Company (BRC) have put in place a ban on working overtime and additional shifts. The AFULE claimed that BRC is attempting to slash wages and conditions in a new enterprise agreement.

One hundred percent of members who participated in a ballot on November 26 approved taking industrial action that could include bans on roster changes and overtime, and indefinite stoppages from one minute to 24 hours duration.

Bowen Rail Company is a bulk carrier of coal and other mineral resources from mines in Queensland to North Queensland export terminals. Its train drivers and engineers are covered by the AFULE (44 members) and the Rail Tram and Bus Union (56 members).

Stonnington council workers ban rubbish collection for wage increase

About 150 Australian Services Union (ASU) members from Stonnington City Council, Victoria have put in place an additional 16 work bans on top of current bans imposed on November 27 in their fight for a higher pay offer and improved conditions in the council’s proposed enterprise agreement.

Workers decided to step up industrial action after rejecting the council’s pay offer on December 6. Stepped up action includes not collecting garbage from most areas of the city including residential waste and not issuing fines for parking and other infringements.

The ASU has been in negotiations with the council since July. Workers want a 7.5 percent wage rise or \$75 per week (whichever is greater), an extra cost-of-living payment, improved entitlements, job security and workplace democracy. Council’s pay offer in a three-year agreement is annual increases of 2.6, 2.3 and 2.3 percent.

The workers’ last pay rise was more than a year ago for just 2.25 percent, an amount well behind the then 5.4 percent inflation rate and well behind the current annual inflation rate of 3.5 percent. The previous wage rises negotiated by the ASU were effectively wage cuts relative to inflation. The putative current 7.5 percent demand, even if agreed to, will not cover the workers’ last decade of wage suppression.

VicRoads administrative workers impose bans

Australian Services Union members (ASU) at the state-run VicRoads (vehicle registrations and licences) began a campaign industrial action on Friday in opposition to the government’s proposed enterprise agreement. Action includes not wearing VicRoads uniform/apparel, stopping work to attach union campaign messages to clothing and emails, and not sending emails that do not contain union campaign messages.

The ASU has restricted action to low-level work bans despite workers voting on December 3 to approve industrial action that could include work stoppages, bans on performing drive tests, diverting inbound phone calls to managers and bans on processing certain fees.

Workers rejected VicRoads’ latest “substandard” pay offer in which the union claimed management was trying to impose a plan for a performance bonus system that would only reward a small minority of workers.

South Australian public servants plan industrial action

More than 40,000 Public Service Association-South Australia (PSA-SA) members are planning industrial action over the state Labor government’s proposed enterprise agreement. The PSA represents workers in health, corrections, child protection, housing and the Country Fire Service, among others.

Negotiations between the PSA and the government began in September but stalemated in November when workers rejected the government’s “up to 3 percent per annum wage rise offer” commencing in August 2025. The PSA claimed its members’ wages since 2019 have declined by between 8 and 10 percent and the government’s current offer falls well short of compensating for that.

The PSA is demanding a 10 percent wage increase that will bring its members’ wages into line with public service workers in other states and in the private sector.

New Zealand nurses hold rolling strikes

New Zealand nurses began a series of rolling strikes and hospital pickets in Auckland last Tuesday. They are targeting a different region each day until December 19, walking off for four hours between 1 p.m.-5 p.m. The stoppages follow a nationwide strike on December 3 in which 36,000 nurses, midwives, and healthcare assistants stopped for eight hours.

The NZ Nurses Organisation (NZNO) is in dispute with Health NZ (HNZ) for higher pay and better resourcing. Union members voted to strike after HNZ indicated that pay rises would be capped at 0.5 and 1 percent over the next two years—a sharp cut in real pay. Chronic understaffing of hospitals is also a major issue, as it was in strikes in 2018 and 2021 under the previous Labour government.

NZNO chief executive Paul Goulter said he was not confident scheduled mediation would be “fruitful,” saying part of the “battle” was to get the health agency to agree to a minimum number of nurses in wards. The shortages are in fact a product of a below-inflation NZNO sellout agreement pushed through in 2023 after it shut down national strike action.

This week, the National Party-led government’s Workplace Relations Minister Brooke van Velden has introduced a bill into parliament to allow employers to deduct pay for partial strike action.

New Zealand M?ori trust locks out low-paid workers

New Zealand disability support provider Te Roopu Taurima o Manukau Trust has locked out its workers just before Christmas. The low-paid workers, who provide community-based care to the disabled, had taken strike action. Many are M?ori, Pasifika, and migrant workers.

Workers voted to strike following prolonged bargaining between the employer and the NZ Public Service Association (PSA). They are striking over their right to secure jobs and a livable income and are resisting the employer's attempts to restrict secondary employment and introduce 90-day trials.

The union has declared the lockout unlawful because the trust didn't give 14 days' notice, as required by law, and has not outlined any negotiating demands. The trust has declared the lockout will run until a new collective is ratified. PSA lawyers are seeking legal remedies and recovery of money lost by workers because of the lockout.

The only action the PSA has called for is that anyone with families involved with Te Roopu Taurima o Manukau Trust facilities "contact the employer directly and express the support for workers caring for their loved ones."



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