

Australian students protest in numerous cities and towns

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An estimated 30,000 Australian school and university students took part in rallies and marches on March 5 as part of the international “Books not Bombs” day of action.

Alongside the large demonstrations in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth (see links to WSWs reports), 5,000 students rallied in the centre of **Adelaide**, the capital of South Australia. High school students marched for an hour through the city to state parliament, where they carried out a ritual burning of the government’s “anti-terrorism” booklet, which was mailed to every Australian household. The demonstration received overwhelming public sympathy. The *Adelaide Advertiser* reported a “cacophony of car horns as motorists signaled support for the protestors”.

One thousand students from 25 state and private schools took part in the demonstration in **Brisbane**, the capital of Queensland. Youth assembled in George Square in the city centre and marched down Adelaide Street, one of the main thoroughfares.

Thousands of young people took part in actions in smaller cities, regional centres and towns across the country.

Over 1,000 students from 20 campuses and high schools rallied in **Canberra**, Australia’s capital city, and marched on the national parliament. Bob Brown, the leader of the Australian Greens, was the only representative of a political party to come out to address the rally. According to a report filed on the “Books not Bombs” website, a busload of students traveled from Young—a small town 200 kilometres away—and 150 students rallied from Alfred Deakin High.

In **Newcastle**, over 300 high school, university and technical college students attended an afternoon rally in

Civic Park to oppose the preparations for war on Iraq. Following the rally, the students marched on the office of Hunter Valley-based Liberal Senator John Teirney.

Contingents to the march came from the Merewether, Cardiff and Waratah high schools, as well as from the Hunter School of Performing Arts and the Tighes Hill Technical College. Placards read, “Nothing will be gained by war”, “Books not bombs” and “No blood for oil”. Many students had brightly coloured peace signs painted on their faces and bodies.

Fifteen-year-old Year 10 student Maddie Lewin from the Hunter School of Performing Arts told the media that she and her friends attended because they wanted to make a contribution to stop the impending war on Iraq. “We don’t want war. We want to show the politicians we are against war and we want John Howard to know too,” she said.

In **Wollongong**, to the south of Sydney, 400 university students and students from Wollongong High, Kiama High and other local schools assembled at the University of Wollongong. The rally featured an open microphone for youth to express their sentiments against war.

An estimated 500 university and school students rallied in **Armidale**, the location of the University of New England, New South Wales’ main inland regional university. Three hundred youth demonstrated through the streets of **Lismore**, a regional centre on the NSW north coast.

Significant demonstrations also took place in regional Victoria. Over 1,000 rallied in **Geelong**, a major manufacturing and port city southwest of Melbourne and home to Deakin University. In **Ballarat** and **Bendigo**, the centres of the state’s western and central districts respectively, hundreds of local high school and university students participated in the international

strike day.

In **Hobart**, capital of the island state Tasmania, 500 students from a dozen different schools rallied in the city's Franklin Square. Students at Guilford High, who had been banned from leaving their college to attend the rally wearing their school uniform, staged a sit-in at the school cafeteria at the time the demonstration was scheduled to begin and refused to attend classes. An estimated 300 university and school students took part in a rally in **Launceston**, the second largest city in the state. Some 100 students held a rally in **Burnie**, a working class town on Tasmania's northern coast.

The response of Australian Prime Minister John Howard to the mass protests on February 14-16 was to dismiss the one million who demonstrated against his government as a "mob". His response to the political assembly of young people on March 5 was to declare, "they should be in school, not running amok through the streets".

We encourage students throughout Australia and New Zealand to send further reports to the WSWS about the protest actions they participated in or antiwar initiatives in which they are involved.



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