

Residents speak to WSWS about the Euro Terraces fire

Our reporters
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The SEP public meeting, “The Bankstown fire: critical issues for workers, students and youth”, was attended by a significant number of long-time residents of the suburb, who are intimately familiar with the financial stress and substandard housing that are endured by broad sections of the working class.

An engaged discussion took place after two reports were presented to the audience, which unanimously supported a resolution calling for the formation of a committee to organise an independent investigation into all the circumstances surrounding the fire in Euro Terraces Building B. Afterward, some of those who participated spoke to the WSWS about their reaction to the discussion and why they had supported the establishment of the committee.

Jerry is a full-time Technical and Further Education (TAFE) worker—an area of education that is being savaged by government budget cuts. He also has another part-time job with a textiles company, which he took to pay the health care costs of his wife, who died 18 months ago. He met the SEP in Bankstown during the campaign for the public meeting.

“In talking to your people on the street, they told me things and I thought I have to find out for myself,” he said. “We have to have a say. At the moment, we won’t get anywhere. There will be whitewash after whitewash.”

Jerry agreed that the fundamental cause of the Bankstown fire was the drive for profit. “It is not just the building industry. Everything is dominated by dollars and cents. I call it Scrooge McDucks, where they have dollars on their eyes. It is like that

everywhere you go. It isn’t like the 1960s and 1970s. There has been a drastic change. Even electricity and water prices are driven by profit. It is a Robin Hood time. We are going back to medieval times.”

Carol, a Bankstown resident, said: “The meeting exposed the lack of information being given to the residents. I was surprised by the lack of information that residents are getting from the authorities, such as Bankstown Council. They need to know what’s happening, to get their lives back but no-one is telling them anything. The residents of Building A in particular need to be informed. The chances are their building is also unsafe.”

When asked about the resolution’s call for an independent investigation, she said: “Somebody certainly does [need to investigate]. We need a Julian Assange.”

Charlie, a retired fitter and turner who worked for 45 years with state rail, said that what struck him most about the meeting were the questions that surround the September 6 fire. “It’s all been covered up. Connie’s loss of life. Why was Jason sent back [deported to China]? Did he know too much?”

Regarding the federal, state and local governments, Charlie said: “You can’t trust any of them. They just feather their own nests and look after each other. The whole thing’s about shortcuts so that profits become greater. They don’t care about people and never have. The lowest people [workers] have to do it—but can they? No harm in trying, and at least someone’s speaking for them.”

George, also from Bankstown, said: “The most important part of the meeting was that someone wants to take charge for working class people. Bankstown is full of them. They have language problems, cultural problems and political problems. They come from all over the world. The legal system from these other countries is different from Australia and they are simply lost and don’t know what to do. The government and police are simply not helping them.

“It is hard to say what is to be done because there is a lot of antagonism against working class people. The idea of the committee is a good idea to get something done. The building industry is now full of such corrupt activity. There is money laundering and a lot of shonky developers. What happened in Euro Terraces in Bankstown is one small example. There are many instances of unqualified workers being injured and then they are simply shuffled away. They are sent back to their countries and told ‘don’t bother us’. This is what has happened to the young man from Euro Terraces who was sent back to China. This was done to stop him giving evidence.”



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