

Workers and youth denounce Australian budget

Our reporters
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World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with students, youth and workers at protest rallies yesterday against the Abbott government's budget. Many voiced their concerns about the attacks on health, education and welfare, others opposed the government assault on asylum-seekers, and some raised concerns about social austerity measures internationally and the danger of war in Ukraine.

Paulo, 28, originally from Chile but now living in Sydney, denounced the attacks on education:

"These cuts will make it harder for me to get an education and still afford to live. I don't have a strong family background in Australia and have to constantly work, which makes it harder to try and study. I'm a labourer but the labour market is now all 'on-call,' which means that you don't have a secure job ...

"I think the government is carrying out these cuts for big business. They're all friends with big business and they're the ones who will profit. The bottom line is it's about money-making.

"Labor's example has been really poor," he continued, "They cleared the way for Abbott. Labor doesn't represent labour anymore, but its own interests. Maybe we need a third socialist party, or maybe even the Greens, although the Greens try to ally themselves with the major parties."

Kian, a journalism student at Petersham TAFE in Sydney, said it was "outrageous that the government is cutting young people off assistance without giving them any other options ...

"My parents live in the Northern Territory but there are no study opportunities there so I'm living in Sydney. My parents send me money every week so I can pay for rent and food because I receive no help from Austudy ...

"It's not only unis that are getting more expensive,

the TAFE's are receiving massive cuts as well. I'm completing my diploma, which is costing me almost \$900, but if I'd missed my placement in this class of 18 students who are being funded, it would have cost me \$12,500. That's the result of TAFE budget cuts imposed by the state government.

"The whole idea of the right to healthcare and education really is being undermined. I honestly don't know what is behind this agenda because it's just absurd. There's no budget emergency or crisis or whatever they want to call it. There's a global economic crisis but these policies are just making our economy worse long-term. We're going to have more people on the streets.

Kian denounced the government treatment of asylum seekers who are detained indefinitely on remote Pacific islands. "If I hear the mainstream media refer to boat people again I'm going to smash something. I can't stand it ... It's your legal right to seek asylum and this 'turn back the boats' policy is absolutely outrageous."

"The Labor Party has gone more and more rightwing and was just falling apart. The Greens are a bit better," she said, then added, "but I don't know. Who are you supposed to vote for?"

Aaron, a 17 year-old high school student, said the budget was "aimed at cutting money from the lowest income earners. It's not even just one cut but four or five different slugs against people who already aren't earning much while the rich get a slap on the wrist.

"The government's doing this because they don't have an idea of what people are going through," he said. I think it's more ideological and part of Abbott's ideology comes into it. He comes from a well-to-do background and doesn't understand the struggles of middle- and low-income wage earners ... It's a lot easier for him to please those who are wealthy, because

that's where his power base is."

Patrik, from the Czech Republic and studying English in Australia, said: "I don't know a lot about the Australian political situation but I know that this budget is not for the people. They will be poorer. It's similar to Europe. In Greece there's over 50 percent youth unemployment and in my country it's 10 percent.

"I don't think the Cold War stopped," he said. "The conflict in Kiev was backed and supported by Washington, which has big interests in Ukraine. For example, Zbigniew Brzezinski, the advisor of President Obama, wrote a book that said if Russia loses Ukraine it will be good for United States because Russia will lose its status as a superpower."

Washington is backing fascist and neo-Nazi groups in Ukraine, he said. "The US says it's against totalitarianism and Nazis but they support them in Ukraine. They say they're against terrorism but they support Al-Qaeda in Syria," he said.

WSWS reporters spoke with some of those attending the rally in Perth, the Western Australian capital.

Connor, 18, a student nurse, said, the education cuts would have a major impact on health and education: "I regard education as an investment. If education is too expensive and people can't afford it then what is going to happen to the next generation. University is becoming a business and it will be harder to get into courses.

"It is sad that there are not enough jobs for graduating nurses. It's a basic human right to have good health care, [irrespective of] whether you're rich or poor. The speakers at the rally have pointed out that a lot of people may not be able afford the \$7 charge to see a general practitioner and choose to go to hospital emergency departments. This will cause a chain reaction ... that just goes on and on."

Graham, 36 and a part-time worker, said the budget would "make it hard for young people to live if their allowances are cut. The government is not thinking of the needs of the individual or the masses of people.

"We really need to find a solution," he said. "Not just criticise but to find a solution and work together for change. It should be a lot better in Australia than it is ... There are a lot of connections and Australia is being affected by the rest of the world. We have to learn from the mistakes of the American economy."

Maureen, an indigenous pensioner, said the budget

would have serious consequences for Aboriginal people.

"I've travelled around Australia and seen how our people are struggling to make ends meet. It's not uncommon for indigenous families to have seven or eight children but what if three children in one family get ill at the same time? If they go to the doctor it will cost at least \$21. That's a lot of money to be taken out of anybody's pocket.

"Hospitals and medical care should be available for everybody but in some of the remote communities medical services are being cut," she continued. "I visited Alice Springs [in central Australia] a couple of years ago and it made me want to cry to see how our people are living."

"My grandson is studying at university. He receives \$400 a fortnight and \$200 comes out for his rent, then he needs lunches and transport costs. He feels like quitting but I've told him not to stop and try to help him with money when I have it because it's a real struggle. If our kids can't afford to live and get an education there will be no hope for young people."



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