

# Melbourne workers and pensioners oppose Australian budget

Our reporters  
21 May 2014

World Socialist Web Site reporters are continuing their discussions with workers, youth and welfare recipients about the social impact of the Abbott government's federal budget, handed down on May 13. Today's interviews are from Melbourne residents.

**Charmaine**, from the outer Melbourne suburb of Dandenong, said: "It's about time ordinary people have their say. I'm on a disability pension, and I care for my 85-year-old mother who is on a pension. Reducing pensions is wrong. Everything else is going up: gas, phones, electricity, bus fares, and not just by 5 cents, but by a lot. We're getting older, we've paid taxes all our lives, and now we're being penalised.

"The \$7 'co-payment' for doctor's visits is going to make it much harder for people who are sick. It sounds small but what if you have to go four times? And then there are the increases in medication costs. People will end up sicker and in the hospital system, which is already broken with people waiting for long periods. Now there will be a lot more.

"Politicians are supposed to be working for us, but they're only working for themselves. They've got us into this mess and now they're taking it out on poor people. They should be sacked."

**Ben**, also from Dandenong, said: "Raising the pension age to 70 is rubbish. I work in aged care and half of those who are about 70, going on 80ish, can barely walk.

"If older people can't work or get a pension they'll end up sleeping on the corner with a cardboard box and a blanket. I've seen it in Melbourne at about 1 a.m.—every 10 metres there is someone sleeping in a cardboard box."

**Jeff**, a retired refrigerator mechanic, has been reading the WSWWS for three years. "What we are witnessing is the end of capitalism," he said. "It's falling apart

everywhere. Youth unemployment is growing everywhere. In India and here, I just hope the ultra-right doesn't take advantage of the situation... I'm 71, and there is no way known that in the job I did I could be working now. I'm wearing hearing aids, I've got osteoarthritis—my job wore me out."

Jeff added: "The Labor Party will make some noises. But they're in the same ballpark—a right-wing, pro-business party. The unions don't do anything. I wouldn't be a member of a union now... The governments are creating a larger and larger underclass. There is a lot of anger in the population."

**Mariel**, a retired nurse, said: "I'm very angry about the budget. It's everyone's right to good health care and education so they can live a comfortable life but the government is robbing people of their rights.

"I think it would be exactly the same if Labor was in. There is no alternative. Labor and Liberal do the same thing when they are in. The Greens are the same; they are all tied to capitalism. All they do is move the furniture a bit."

**Richard**, who works at a sandblasting factory, said: "I'm on the same wage I was on in 1990—\$670 a week clear. Wages have stagnated for 25 years. I'm a lower-paid section of the working class, but it is the working class that does all the heavy lifting in society. The capitalists do nothing and contribute nothing."

He continued: "Austerity and war go hand in hand. They cannot do this peacefully. Australia is provoking China and if China doesn't respond they will go further. Look at the Ukraine, the US is turning to fascists and in Libya they worked with Al Qaeda. All the horrors of World War II are coming back again."

**Elizabeth**, speaking outside the Royal Melbourne Hospital, said: "I'm so angry. One of my sons has had a bone marrow transplant, and they're going to cut him

off welfare assistance, after we've fought for two years to get it. Nothing is free. Drugs alone cost \$200 a fortnight.

"I work full time, plus on call—at one time I worked three jobs—to pay for his medications... My daughter has taken 18 months off her studies, to help with my son, and now she will have to pay a fortune just to finish her degree."

Elizabeth added: "It is totally wrong. They should be investing the money in health and education, not in military equipment. It's governments that want wars, not the people."

**David**, from Melbourne's northern suburbs, receives a carer's pension for looking after his elderly parents. He was previously rejected for the disability pension despite suffering nerve damage from an operation on his legs.

"They feed us a whole lot of facts about the economy being in trouble, that we are in debt, and have a deficit," he said. "They are trying to get a surplus. There's no point in having a surplus if everyone is walking around hungry, and you don't have hospitals and education and housing for the very poor, or no initiatives for the disabled people."

**Joe**, retiree and on a disability pension, said: "What's affected me the most in this budget is how those under 30 have been targeted—it's unconscionable what will happen to them."

Australia's major parties, he continued, "are aiming for the US model, where it's hands-off from the government—we'll let the top end of society take care of things. If they get away with this, it'll be open slather against all rights to welfare, health and education."

Joe said he was required to go through a "huge number of hoops" to qualify for the disability pension. "You have to satisfy a points system. I had to get my psychologist to sit with me, and to speak to them and submit documents. If I didn't have someone willing to do that—and use their time to front up and defend my rights—I wouldn't have received it."

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