

Workers and youth denounce Australian budget

Our reporters
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World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with workers and youth attending protests yesterday in Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle against the Abbott government's budget measures. None were aware that the main budget appropriation bills had already been passed by Labor and the Greens in the Senate.

In Newcastle, **Madeline**, an architecture and philosophy student, commented: "I'm from a working-class background—my dad worked in the mines in Singleton—and I'm concerned about what these budget cuts will mean for the lives of ordinary people. I'm disturbed about the attacks on unemployment benefits."

Informed that Greens leader Christine Milne told the Senate that her party would not block the appropriation bills because it "did not want to cause a constitutional crisis," Madeline said: "Why shouldn't we create a crisis for this government? It's causing a crisis for millions of ordinary people, including students, the unemployed and pensioners. The cuts have to be fought because people have the right to live a decent existence."

Asked about increased military spending, she replied: "Why should people be forced to go without basic necessities, such as health care and education, or support if they're unemployed, when billions are being spent on fancy war planes and other destructive weapons? There seems to have been increasing talk about war over the last two years especially and a kind of scare-mongering about dangers and threats to Australia to justify it. I'm opposed to anything to do with war."

Beth, a dietician, was concerned about the cuts to indigenous health services. "I see a lot of inequality in Aboriginal health already, but this budget will make it ten times worse. As far as I am concerned, there's not been any improvement in the conditions of Aboriginal

people under Labor or Liberal governments, especially in my home town of Raymond Terrace."

Beth opposed the higher military spending and the government's "border protection" anti-refugee program. "My daughter's family is from Zimbabwe and one of her family members was held in the Villawood detention centre. That was nine years ago and the conditions were like a jail. There were even children in there. The conditions that refugees have to suffer are quite appalling," she said.

Sam, a TAFE visual arts student, opposed the government's education cuts and said there were "no differences" between Labor and Liberal. "Everybody should have access to free high-quality education but this budget is further privatising education, which will directly affect me. I lived in London for two years and saw university fees go up over there, which was devastating for young people in England. This should not happen in Australia."

Commenting on the elimination of unemployment benefits for six months each year for those under 30 years, Sam said: "Having left home at 16, I know from experience that these budget measures will lead to young people committing suicide. When somebody cannot get themselves out of a situation such as homelessness they feel they have no option but to take their own lives ... This budget is sick, it is wrong and it is going to destroy lives."

In Sydney, **Roula**, an IT manager at a major bank, said "cutting health for the sake of going to war is unfair." She added: "People can't afford to buy houses anymore ... Everything has become so hard, so expensive ... Going to hospitals, getting operations, it's a very long wait."

Originally from Jordan, Roula opposed the transformation of the Middle East into a war zone. "I

came to this country for a better life but actually I'm thinking twice about this now. I'm seeing things are not fair. I left my family for what exactly, if I can't find a better life here?" she asked.

In Melbourne, **Deb**, who works in disability services, made a two-hour train trip, after working a night shift, to attend the demonstration. "I'm here because of the changes expected to be made in disability support pensions [DSP], especially people with mental illness," she explained.

"If we don't look out for people on DSP then it becomes a far bigger problem for society. People with a mental illness, how are they meant to cope applying for 30 jobs or however many jobs they have to apply for? ... I fear for Medicare, pensioners, free education. There are so many things that are being attacked by this horrible government."

Deb said she used to be a "staunch Greens and Labor supporter" but could no longer support these parties because of their anti-refugee policies. Asked about the boost to military spending in the budget and the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia," she replied:

"It seems to me that the US and the government are going to set up as many Pacific bases as they can so they can launch an attack from there. I think that they are spending our money on the wrong things ...

"In the US, young people have been forced into the military because they haven't got jobs. They are forced to go to another country that has nothing to do with them, except protecting capitalist resources. Then they turn around and bring them home, and they have post-traumatic stress because of the horrible things they have seen or done."

Harry and Sylva, 16- and 15-years- old, initially said the rally should pressure Labor to oppose the budget cuts. After a WSWS reporter pointed to the big business character of both Labor and the Greens, Sylva replied: "It's true, the government is supposed to be made for the people, not the rich. But none of the parties represent the people."

Asked about the military funding in the budget, Harry replied: "It's disgusting, boosting military spending. There is no need to go to war—all that's behind this is greed."

Luke, a single parent who works in advertising and marketing but has been unemployed for six weeks, said: "I don't like anything about Labor or Liberal at

the moment. When the budget was announced, Labor and the Greens were jumping up and down about it. But it all seems like just more token gestures ...

"I'm opposed to most of Labor's major policies, on health, education, and particularly their asylum seeker policies. It's the same all over the globe. Everywhere there's a shift away from the needs of people and toward shareholder and big business profits."

Paul, an IT worker, commented: "I think it's a very cruel budget. I've got a young kid and another on the way, and it's going to affect their future. They will have to spend so much cash getting to university."

"Not getting the dole for the first six months after you leave school means that you will have to take any job that comes along—not the right job. It doesn't seem very fair for young people at all ... I think the budget seems to help the rich. It seems like society is getting more and more unfair."



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