

Australian workers and youth support SEP rallies defending Assange

Our reporters

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Over the past week, Socialist Equality Party (Australia) campaigners have won important support from workers, students and young people for upcoming rallies in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in defence of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The hostility of ordinary people to the US attempts to prosecute Assange for his role in the exposure of war crimes and diplomatic conspiracies stands in stark contrast to the complicity of the entire Australian political and media establishment.

The Liberal-National Coalition government and the Labor opposition have refused to fulfil their obligations to Assange as an Australian citizen, while the Greens have not mentioned him for almost two months. The trade unions, including the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, have rejected demands for a campaign to free him, making clear that they will actually do nothing to defend press freedom and democratic rights.

Dozens of workers and youth expressed their backing for the SEP demonstrations.

In the Brisbane working class suburb of Inala, **Porte**, a student and part-time worker, originally from Liberia, said: “We should fight to free Julian Assange because he is there for the people, for everybody. It is crystal clear that if he did not put the reporting out there we would not have the means, the facilities, to know stuff that we can be educated about. Without people like him, we would know nothing.”

Asked if he thought the working class could free Assange, Porte replied: “We can free him, but only by coming together and fighting. One person cannot win if we stand alone. Workers of the world against the rich and the powerful, that’s the only way we can win.

“We don’t have the money or the lawyers to beat these people, because they have everything. So the best way we can help is to stand up and let the world know

what is happening.

“We have to build a movement for the working class people, for everybody, because this world we are living in today is not about one party, it is about everybody. We have to rise up because no one is in a position to help us. So you have to wake up, get up off your seats and stand up, like the musician, Bob Marley, said ‘get up, stand up for your rights.’”

In Sydney, **Emma**, who works in design, commented: “Ultimately Chelsea Manning and Assange are voices of free speech and them being punished is scary. In a democracy, information is supposed to be more widely shared and there should be reason why they are kept secret.

“The population absolutely has a right to know. That’s why we live in a democracy. That’s what we vote for.”

Emma condemned bipartisan legislation, passed last year, which targets the use of encryption. She also denounced the recent Australian Federal Police raids on journalists over stories revealing Australian involvement in war crimes and plans for expanded government spying.

“It was not communicated as to why the raids [on the media] happened... I think it’s the ‘why’ that keeps being hidden from us and that’s not democratic.”

Victoria said: “The people who have to be in prison are the US war criminals. They kill innocent people. Assange is locked up because he has exposed the truth.” She said Australian governments should be “ashamed” for refusing to defend Assange. “Labor don’t care, because they support the US alliance too.”

Victoria also denounced the corporate media, stating: “The media is just very disgraced. The journalists are like politicians too. They say Assange is not a journalist. But why do they make that false claim?

Maybe because they are going to lose their job if they don't."

Victoria concluded: "Holding the rally is beautiful. Assange should be very proud that in Australia there are so many people who want to do that for him. We need an international campaign. The powerful have been winning for a long time, but that is going to change. They will lose."

Jess, a nurse in Newcastle, north of Sydney, said: "The persecution of Julian Assange is completely wrong. He should be hailed a hero. Because of what he has published, people are questioning the government and the role of the media.

"If he is extradited to the US, this would be an attack on whistleblowers and journalists around the world. We cannot allow it to happen. Now we're seeing police raids on journalists in Australia, and with Julian imprisoned and facing extradition, I think humanity is at a real turning point.

"The mainstream media, of course, is attempting to cover up what Assange has done... But there is immense support for Assange from the majority of people. So there's a gap between what the people are actually thinking and what the mainstream media is telling us.

"The Australian governments, Labor or Liberal, haven't supported Assange because he has exposed them. History will show that Assange is someone who has sacrificed everything to bring forward the truth.

"I'll be coming to the rally in Sydney, and will bring my husband too. It's important that as many people as possible get involved, because what happens to Assange will have implications all over the world. I stand with Julian Assange 100 percent."

In Melbourne, **Louis**, a university lab tech worker commented: "For about eight years, I've always wanted to be like Julian Assange. I was 11 years old when I first heard of him. I was rebelling against the US government going into the Middle East.

"I've always had the spirit of having free information from the government. But they keep everything to themselves. People like that Assange got it out into the light of day. They don't like their dirty laundry being aired. Governments should serve people in an open forum."

Harsha, an IT worker, originally from India, said: "Assange provided the dirty secrets of the US to the public. He published a video of a US soldiers shooting

innocent civilians in Iraq. He revealed their crimes and that's why the US government does not want him to be free. But Assange did not do anything illegal. He should be free."

Tim, a nursing student, commented: "They want to control the information that is let out to the public... including all the deep state operations of the government and the actions of military.

"I think that everyone should have access to all information. You shouldn't have governments operating in the shadows. They should have oversight on them. They don't want that. That's why the police raided the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"If we don't know what's going on, we can't do anything about it. It's a form of mind control. If the government and police are allowed to control the information people get, then that controls the reality we live in."



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