

Attend “Free Assange and Manning” meetings this weekend in Australia and New Zealand

Our reporter
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Public meetings to discuss the next stages of the international campaign to secure the freedom of persecuted WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange and former whistleblower Chelsea Manning will be held in Brisbane on November 23, and in Bankstown, Sydney; the central Australian town of Alice Springs; and the New Zealand capital Wellington, on November 24. The first event in the meeting series, “Stop the US extradition of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange! Free Assange and Manning!” was held on November 16 in the town of Toronto, north of Sydney. The last meeting will be held in Melbourne on December 15.

Julian Assange is being imprisoned and suffering deteriorating health in the maximum-security Belmarsh Prison in London, ahead of an extradition trial on February 25, 2020. With the collaboration of the British and Australian governments, the Trump administration is seeking to render him to the US to face 18 charges, including 17 of espionage, that carry a life sentence of up to 175 years. Chelsea Manning is being imprisoned in Virginia and fined \$1,000 per day for refusing to testify before the grand jury that was commissioned by the US Justice Department to file charges against Assange.

Over the coming weeks and months, the greatest possible mobilisation of the working class must be developed to demand an end to the extradition trial, Assange’s immediate and unconditional release, and the freedom of Chelsea Manning.

The campaign for the meetings to discuss this perspective has featured informational speak-outs in public areas of working-class suburbs, leafleting at workplaces and factories, forums at university campuses and social media promotion.

Despite the general silence on Assange and Manning in the official media, the campaigns of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) and Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand have once again met with overwhelming support. In the working class, both Assange and Manning are viewed as courageous fighters for the truth, due to their role in the publication in 2010 of damning exposures of US and allied war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, diplomatic intrigues and political corruption.

The extent of the underlying support for Assange and Manning was also revealed in the response to a notification by Bankstown Council, just four days prior to the meeting, that it was cancelling the SEP’s booking of the Bankstown Library for the event.

A Council official cited only a sweeping clause in the terms and conditions of hire, which states that cancellation of an event can be made “for whatever reason, particularly rallies of a political nature and in cases which may discriminate, vilify, be considered offensive conduct, or have the potential to lead to public disorder.”

The SEP responded with a letter to the Council officer insisting the cancellation was immediately rescinded.

SEP assistant national secretary Cheryl Crisp wrote:

“You can have absolutely no grounds or evidence for declaring that this meeting, or any other that we have held, ‘may discriminate, vilify, be offensive to, or lead to public disorder.’ Our party has held literally hundreds of political demonstrations, rallies and public meetings throughout your council area and the country, all without incident.”

The letter pointed out that defenders of Assange

could only draw the conclusion that the cancellation was due to opposition to the campaign for Assange's freedom.

The letter was sent to the mayor of Bankstown Council and the 14 other elected councillors, with a request that they intervene into the situation. The SEP also informed its members and longest-standing supporters of the Council's action, as well as people with whom the party has worked closely in the campaign to defend Assange, including filmmaker and journalist John Pilger. A significant number immediately wrote letters to Bankstown Council, adding their voice to the call for the decision to be rescinded.

The defence of democratic rights and of Assange and Manning that was expressed to the Council was the major factor in the cancellation being reversed within 24 hours. The meeting will proceed as advertised at the Lansdowne Rooms of the Bankstown Library.

The SEP and SEG urge all those who value and uphold core democratic principles, such as freedom of speech and media independence, and who support the freedom of Assange and Manning, to attend one of the meetings this weekend.

For people internationally, or who live too far from where the events are being held, the meeting at Bankstown Library in Sydney will be livestreamed on the SEP Australia Facebook page, starting at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, November 24, Australian eastern daylight time (UTC +11 hours). [Click here for a time convertor.](#)

The meeting details are:

Brisbane

Saturday, November 23, 2pm,
Kurilpa Hall,
174 Boundary St, West End
Tickets: \$5/\$3 (concession)

Alice Springs

Sunday, November 24, 2:30pm,
Andy McNeill Room,
93 Todd St, Alice Springs

Sydney

Sunday, November 24, 2.30pm,
Lansdowne Room, Bankstown Library,
80 Rickard Rd, Bankstown,
Tickets: \$7/\$5 (concession)

Wellington, New Zealand

Sunday, November 24, 3:30pm,

Victoria University of Wellington,
Pipitea Campus, Bunny Street,
Rutherford House, level 1, room RH102,
(above the Mezzanine)

Melbourne

Sunday, December 15, 2:30pm,
Arts House, Meat Market,
5 Blackwood Street, North Melbourne
Tickets: \$5/\$3 (concession)



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact