

# Youth demonstrating in Australia speak out against climate change and war

Our reporters  
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Students and young people around Australia joined global rallies against climate change on November 29. Sit-down protests involving thousands of primary and secondary school students took place in major cities.

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) campaigners received warm support from students and young people, several of whom gave strongly-felt interviews to IYSSE members. The IYSSE's socialist and internationalist perspective set it apart from all the other organisations and parties present.

In Melbourne, a march of around 300 students and youth was organised by Uni Students for Climate Justice. However, this group, with close ties to the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative organisation, promoted illusions in the anti-working class trade unions, and the capitalist Labor and Greens parliamentary parties.

The first main speaker at the rally was Tim Read, a Greens member of the Victorian state parliament. Read painted climate change as a parochial issue and criticised the development of new housing. "We're opening up hectares of land every day to new suburbs and every home is being hooked up to gas," Read said. "So when you think climate, think state."

Read's comments served to divert attention from the responsibility of the major corporations, which generate the vast majority of carbon emissions, and the role of global capitalism as a whole.

The next speaker, high school student Evie, said: "The ruling class is not threatened nearly to the same extent by climate change as we are. Their livelihoods are not at risk, ours are. Our futures, our family, our children. This is why, time after time, we have seen our government ignore this tremendous climate catastrophe."

The final main speaker was Maddy, a call centre worker and organiser for the recently-formed United Workers Union, which is linked to the Labor Party. She was introduced as a "socialist" but did not utter the word during her speech.

Maddy criticised "Labor and Liberal governments" that "have done nothing to help us, and the same goes for climate change," but urged support for the Labor Party-aligned trade unions. She said: "Unions need to take up the issue and play a leading role in tackling the climate crisis." The unions have imposed cuts to jobs and conditions for decades, yet she claimed: "Without unions, there is no real way to fight back."

Lydia, 17, told the IYSSE that to stem climate change, "an international program is definitely necessary, because it's not just Australia—it's everywhere. And in a lot of countries it's even worse, like in America."

Giovanni, a law student from the University of Cagliari on the Italian island of Sardinia, said: "Capitalism has structures of production which are simply incompatible with stopping climate change. It's not climate change—it's climate destruction. It's not just happening, it's being made to happen. There is no ethical capitalism. Green capitalism is a hoax. We need to rethink pretty much everything about economics."

Giovanni agreed that the climate change struggle must be international in scope. "If this issue becomes a national issue, we will be at war with each other within a few years—a Third World War, I think. Capitalism, cyclic processes, then war. It's all the same."

Giovanni said none of the official political parties—including the supposed "left"—are warning of the danger of war. "All of the parties, they are dominated by money. They don't care about the issues facing workers," he said. "And, actually, the worst

attacks against the people have been from the ones that call themselves ‘left,’ with the help of the unions.”

When IYSSE campaigners raised the issue of the jailed WikiLeaks founder and journalist Julian Assange, Giovanni said: “Assange has to be freed. He is one of those people that we need more of—the ones that speak the truth about war and lies of the governments.”

In Sydney, a group of Year 7 students from Chatswood High School spoke with the IYSSE. Cambry said: “We’re confident of these protests but we’re also scared because we know that there are people that only care about money and power. At first a lot of teachers were not very happy because we are missing school but now they are starting to support it because they know why...

“People who produce greenhouse gases are gaining their own benefits. They are such sociopaths. They’re not thinking of how it’s going to affect people with low-quality air. We have been on walks where the air quality was so bad we were struggling to breathe.”

Another Chatswood student, Swig, added: “We’re taking time out of our education because they [the government] are not doing anything. They need to take action. We’re not doing what the government expects. They can’t control us in these protests.”

Nina, a friend, commented: “We can’t just let them destroy the planet that we’re supposed to grow up and live in.”

Tony, originally from Hong Kong, was in Sydney for work. He said: “It’s quite disappointing. The government is supposed to work for the citizens, work for the people, not for the banks. But they don’t.

“It’s very bad in Hong Kong as well. They are not so focussed on the general public. That is a very obvious problem, for me, in Hong Kong. The capitalists and the environmental protection agencies are looking at money and profit. But this is about the life of people on this planet.”



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