

Australian and New Zealand educators and parents support October 15 school strike

Our reporters

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Parents and Educators from Australia and New Zealand have sent in messages of support for the global school strike being held on October 15.

The strike was called by Lisa Diaz, a parent of two in the United Kingdom and a member of the SafeEdforAll (Safe Education for All) campaign group. This followed the first global school strike held on October 1, which was supported by the WSWS and won international support from parents, educators and workers.

On October 9, Diaz announced a second strike on Twitter, as the pandemic continues to ravage children and students internationally.

In Australia and New Zealand, the governments who had previously been held up as models for successfully eliminating the virus are now adopting the homicidal “herd immunity” policies, like that in the UK and the US, demanding the population needs to learn to live with the virus.

In the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria, the Liberal and Labor state governments are accelerating the reopening of the schools, while COVID-19 case numbers, hospitalisation and death rates continue to grow.

Victoria, Australia’s second most populous state, recorded 2,297 cases today, the highest number of cases recorded in any Australian state since the pandemic began. The Andrews Labor government has made clear it remains committed to the staged reopening of schools, already begun and set to for completion by November 5.

The SEP in Australia, the SEG in New Zealand and the Committee for Public Education (CFPE) stand with teachers, parents, students and many others in opposing this reckless and dangerous reopening agenda. They are urging teachers, school workers, students and working

families to form and join rank-and-file action safety committees to fight for a scientifically based program for the eradication of the virus across the globe.

Mike, a parent and university lecturer, told the WSWS, “As a university educator in Australia, I urge the widest possible international support for the strike initiated by Lisa Diaz. This is a critical step forward in developing a mass movement of the working class worldwide against the homicidal “reopening” drive by the corporate elite to push working people and their children back into unsafe schools and workplaces, in order to generate profits for the billionaires.

“My concern is all the greater because many of my students in western and southwestern Sydney have been infected, even while the campus has been closed, and I have school- and preschool-aged grandchildren. I support the call issued by the *World Socialist Web Site* and health experts for a global fight to eradicate the COVID-19 virus as the only way to protect the lives of children and working people.”

Campbell, a secondary school teacher and member of the CFPE, said, “I fully support the October 15 strike called by Lisa Diaz and UK parents. The abject indifference of governments and unions to working people and their children is criminal. Forcing students to return to school to face death or suffer the debilitating effects of long Covid is reprehensible by any standards. Demanding of parents, that not doing so represents a criminal action is absurd.

“Globally, parents, educators and health care workers who are also experiencing the disdain of the financial elite’s drive for profit, need to unite behind a united and common action. This includes moving away from the unions who are actively supporting the government dictates in driving us back into deadly workplaces, and

setting up independent committees to protect the health and safety of our children and their parents.”

Carolyn, a university lecturer said: “I know many parents and teachers here in Australia are deeply worried about the return to school while the Delta variant is still circulating in the community. I watch with sadness and anger as unvaccinated children are put into harm’s way for the sake of profit.

“The school strikes initiated by Lisa Diaz are resonating with so many parents globally. As with climate change this is a global problem and needs a global solution. Only by taking matters into their own hands can workers, parents, teachers effect change. Bravo to all those who are standing up for our future. I, and many others, stand with you.”

A statement from **Evrin**, a Masters student and International Youth and Students for Social Equality member in Melbourne, said: “The #SchoolStrike2021 is an important initiative to take the health and lives of students, teachers, parents and the broader community out of the hands of the profit-interested capitalist class. Students and youth in every country, of every age, and at every level should get involved and show their support!”

Jak, an early childhood educator from New Zealand, wrote a statement of support. It said: “As Covid continues to spread around Auckland, and is inching towards the rest of the nation, we only have to look at what is happening here and overseas to realise that somehow children have become collateral damage in this pandemic. Parents are told it’s safe to go to school, to early learning centres, children don’t spread the virus, children may only get a mild dose, teachers will have protocols in place, yet as many parents in the UK can attest to, children are getting sick, they are being hospitalised and they can and do spread it!

“In Aotearoa New Zealand we recognise children as taonga, as right holders, they are our future, yet somehow in a pandemic situation those that make the decisions from the safety of their offices are prepared to play Russian roulette with our most precious treasures, our future citizens. Until there is more extensive research, until we can fully understand the effects of long Covid on our younger generation, we cannot and should not sit back and just accept that it’s a risk worth taking, because it simply just isn’t.”

Rachel, a teacher from New Zealand, wrote of the

parent’s strike, “Excellent! Standing up for their children’s lives. This is organised outside of the unions and educational organisations that have stood aside to follow Boris Johnson’s decree to ‘let the bodies pile high in their 1000’s.’ This strike deserves the full support of NZ teachers and parents.

“Early childhood teachers forced back to work in Alert Level 3 settings, where the most rigorous attempts at infection control are powerless to stop an airborne virus, could do well to follow this strike action. I will be sending another video of support to these brave people who are taking action to save lives and tell their govt ‘no, we won’t learn to live with this virus’... we won’t send our kids into unsafe schools.”

Colleen, from the regional city of Shepparton in Victoria, Australia, told the WSWS, “As a grandparent in Australia, whose children are refusing to send their children back to school until they are fully vaccinated, I am 100% behind Lisa’s call for action and the October 15th strike. Schools are not safe workplaces.”

Susan, another Victorian educator said, “I strongly support Lisa Diaz and the October 15 school strike from Victoria, Australia. Too many students are suffering from long Covid and are dying in the UK. Victoria is following this reckless policy of opening schools as our cases climb and school closures increase with limited numbers attending. Our kids are losing their parents and grandparents and even their lives to this preventable disease. Enough is enough. Keep our kids safe!”

Follow Lisa Diaz on Twitter: @Sandyboots2020. Send messages of support for Friday’s strike to the WSWS here. Messages of solidarity on Twitter should be sent using the hashtag #SchoolStrike2021 and should tag the World Socialist Web Site (@WSWS_Updates).



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