

Australian parents and educators declare support for October 15 school strike

Our reporters
15 October 2021

Parents and teachers from Australia continue to submit statements of support for the global school strike being held on October 15.

The strike was called by Lisa Diaz, mother of two from the United Kingdom, and a member of the SafeEdforAll (Safe Education for All) campaign group. The call followed the first successful school strike on October 1, which was supported by the WSWs and won international support.

In Australia, parents and teachers are deeply concerned about the accelerated drive to reopen the schools by both state Labor and Liberal governments, under conditions of the highest recorded cases of COVID-19 in Australia since the beginning of the pandemic.

Frank, a former educator, said, “As a retired teacher I completely support Lisa Diaz’s call for a school strike on 15 October. This is the only way to halt the murderous program of school reopening worldwide. International experience shows that school reopening fuels the pandemic. Students can get COVID-19, get sick and die, they can also pass it on to their teachers and loved ones at home. Lisa’s call will resonate with teachers, parents, and students because it is independent of the unions and international in scope.”

Meaghan, mother of three from Newcastle in New South Wales (NSW), said, “I support the campaign. Lisa says correctly the schools pose a very serious risk. Children are unvaccinated. The government’s position is not coming from a scientific viewpoint. We need to take what is happening elsewhere and learn from it. The virus is global. The virus is not going away by itself. I am worried by the variants of the virus that could come from not protecting people from this virus.”

Referring to the reopening of schools Meaghan said,

“The government is sending children back to increase workforce participation at the expense of child safety. It seems crazy. My fundamental frustration is why don’t kids’ lives matter? There is a real lack of awareness of COVID, an attitude that double vaccination is bulletproof. This is a product of the government messaging. Many seem not to understand the highly contagious nature of this virus. They think it’s like the flu for kids. Some I’ve spoken to say that if it wasn’t safe the government wouldn’t be sending kids back to school.

“I still don’t know if I am going to send my children to school. I have a son with an autoimmune disease, but I have equal concern for all my three children. With my son who is completely immunocompromised I am horrified at the thought of him getting this virus.

“The school are doing very basic preparation, encouraging mask wearing and separating the children in different groups to supposedly minimise contact. The safety standards are not enough. I think they want all the kids to catch it and there is an expectation that they will catch it, even children are saying this. It’s very difficult to help your children navigate this when this is the perception.

“I feel for the teachers who are in the middle of all this. There is little information, it’s hard to make a risk assessment. I feel people have been worn down by the lockdown and the government message is that COVID-19 is not a threat is causing people to let their guard down.”

Cristina, a casual worker in aged- and child-care said, “I absolutely support and agree with the school strikes. I feel for the workers, and it’s a tough call for the parents sending their kids to school and day care centres.”

Describing the unsafe conditions for under six -year-

old children and staff where she works, she added, “Some of the children attend more than one centre and, as a casual, I get sent to multiple venues. There’s no procedure for temperature testing and no social distancing.

“There are unmasked maintenance people coming into the foyer, as well as cleaners and deliveries of nappies, while the parents, when dropping off and picking up the kids, have to wait outside the property fence.”

John, a father of three, said, “The reopening of the schools in NSW during a significant peak of the COVID-19 pandemic is of considerable concern and evidence that the government has no concern for public health. Their real concern is economic growth and for profits. Australia had a successful eradication of COVID-19 in the first year of the pandemic. With the return of the virus, it is now clear that the government has fallen into line with what’s happening in other countries, in particular, what’s happening in the US and Europe which have adopted a policy of ‘living with the virus.’

“You cannot live with this virus, the strategy by governments is madness and it needs to be fought. Some oppositional voices of experts in the press are getting through but I am hearing less and less dissenting voices as things are opened up.

“This policy is going to cause mass death and a collapse of the healthcare system. This is the concern among health workers. Today I heard the new NSW premier, who has been installed to enforce these measures, wants to light up the Sydney Opera House to honour frontline workers. This is an insult to these people who are working in profoundly difficult conditions with the constant stress of exposure to themselves and among their patients.”

Follow Lisa Diaz on Twitter: @Sandyboots2020. Send messages of support for Friday’s strike to the WSWS here. Message 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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