Workers and students in Australia call for international anti-war movement

Our reporters
1 April 2022

Youth and workers in Australia spoke with the World Socialist Web Site, expressing their hostility to the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. Their comments reflect the growing understanding that the Biden administration has deliberately provoked the reactionary Russian invasion of Ukraine and is continually intensifying its aggressive threats against Russia, raising the danger of a nuclear war.

They also give voice to the opposition to the Liberal-National government placing Australia on the frontlines of the US war drive against both Russia and China, with the complete support of the Labor Party, the Greens and the rest of the political establishment.

Grace, a Western Sydney University student commented: “I don’t feel like people should die unnecessarily. It’s not that I want [Russia] to bomb hospitals. I don’t want Australia to join the war.” She added: “[The Australian government] has blown up so many hospitals in the Middle East.”

Asked about the anti-Russian propaganda pervading the mainstream media, including the attacks on Russian artists and athletes, Grace said: “I view that as discrimination. It shouldn’t happen at all, regardless of what’s happening… If you don’t see any Russian culture, and all you see is negative, you are going to be programmed to hate that culture or race, and that is wrong.”

Grace said the COVID-19 pandemic was intensifying the war drive. She noted that the military is “an industry that is heavily promoted during COVID. When people were losing their jobs during the lockdown, there was a lot more advertising of the military.”

Grace said the government response to COVID “is sort of eugenics, and it’s all to keep money going. I really do think we’ve allowed our elderly to die. By letting the virus circulate, it’s killing them. It’s going into nursing homes and killing everyone that’s in need of care. I just feel like old people are at the back of the pile.”

Sam, a journalist, said understanding the motivation for the Russian invasion of Ukraine “is not a justification for the war.” He commented: “Russia was compelled to go to war because of its unfair treatment by the International Monetary Fund, and the expansion of NATO.

“NATO was made to combat the Soviet Union initially but ended up expanding after it fell. You would have thought the falling of the Soviet Union would have rendered the treaty useless but instead it expanded rather than retracted.”

Sam said the world was “closer to World War III than we have been in 60 years.” He noted: “The Cuban Missile Crisis was exactly 60 years ago this year. It is troubling. Actually, we are probably more advanced in stepping towards World War III than we were even during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

“There has been a certain loss of memory of what some of the horrors of these previous wars were like, which heightens the danger of war,” he said. He also noted the vast expansion of the military-industrial complex.

On the fight to build an international anti-war movement, Sam said: “I would like it if there was a strong anti-war movement in Russia, we have seen some indication of that. I would love for that to be a reality that there is a strong anti-war movement that can overturn the trajectory that this war is going.”

KW, a coal mine worker in central Queensland, said he blamed the capitalist system for taking humanity to the brink of a nuclear war. “I am fully against this war,” he said. “I hope no one drops a nuclear bomb!”
He said the US had been “pushing, pushing Russia for years” to provoke the conflict in Ukraine. “The US and its allies are trying to push China into war as well, over Taiwan. They call Russia and China communist, but they are no more communist than Australia is.”

“I just say, stop the war!” he said, “but Biden doesn’t want to stop it. He is a capitalist. Big business is making too much money out of war. The US has filled its pockets on wars for the past 30 years.”

KW added that “NATO has been moving closer and closer to Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. That was the whole point about the breakup of the Soviet Union.

“The West has also put sanctions and more sanctions on Russia since 2014, trying to starve out the Russian people and give Putin no choice but to attack.”

A school security guard in Brisbane, Keith, said he is “deeply opposed to this war. It is no doubt coming from Washington, not Moscow. There is a higher financial agenda behind this war, and so many underlying factors, based on profit, banking and business systems.”

“A lot of people oppose this war, but others get sucked into anti-Russia and anti-China hate. I’ve been reading the WSWS so I know what’s happening,” Keith added. “So many soldiers and others are dying. We need to unite Russian and Ukrainian workers, and workers everywhere, against the war.”

Ergin, an IT worker originally from Turkey, said: “To me, what the US is carrying out in Ukraine closely resembles other examples around the world. For example, the US has a long history of supporting, right-wing, nationalist/Islamist forces in Turkey.

“I believe the situation in Ukraine is very similar. The people of Russia and Ukraine, no matter how similar, have been polarised so badly that it will take years to mend the wounds.”

Ergin denounced the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a “terrible act.” However, he added: “I also find the Western powers to be equally, (if not more) responsible for the conflict in that they have been fuelling hatred by propaganda, covert operations and arming ultranationalist forces at the cost of civilians.

“There is only a ‘lose-lose’ outcome out of such a conflict and no one will benefit from it.”

Youp, a science student at the University of Newcastle, said: “The anti-war protests in Russia really