

# Australian workers explain why they are attending the International May Day Online Rally

Our reporters  
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The *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) recently spoke to workers across Australia who explained why they are joining the International May Day Online Rally this weekend.

The global event will be addressed by leaders of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement. They will present the socialist and internationalist program required for workers to fight the escalating threat of world war, the turn by governments to authoritarianism and the onslaught on the social rights of the working class.

The rally is being held amid a reemergence of working-class struggle, with mass opposition, including in Australia, to soaring inflation, stagnant or declining wages and the official “let it rip” COVID policies.

Layers of workers and young people internationally have issued video and written statements on why they are taking part in the rally. Use the hashtag #MayDay2022 to share your own statement on social media.

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The WSWS spoke to **Sam**, a health worker in pathology from Victoria, who said: “I’ve seen my colleagues become affected by COVID, some of them are casual workers who have had their income disrupted. One of them had a close friend who died from COVID. She was in hospital for a month. And my friend had COVID herself as well, so she was off for a few weeks. Personally, I’ve had friends who have lost family members to COVID, very suddenly. It’s very distressing for everyone who’s involved in it.

“The impact of ‘let it rip’ is that we’re constantly short of staff due to sick leave. The hospitals are all full, surgeries are delayed, you name it. You’ve got people getting sick, people dying, when it can be prevented. The ‘herd immunity’ allows infections to keep growing with no end in sight.

“An international fight is required to bring COVID to zero. Since the outbreak in 2020, there is no government, outside of China, that has been consistently committed to Zero COVID from start to finish. At an earlier stage of the pandemic, some governments, in Australia and New Zealand for instance, tried to contain the virus and it did work. Now the same

governments are allowing the virus to spread, while abandoning testing, contact tracing, and so on.

“The working class are the majority of those who are affected by COVID. They are the class that needs to take the struggle for Zero COVID forward internationally. They’re the ones at the front line, they’re the ones getting sick, they’re forced to go to work for financial reasons. They don’t have the luxury of being able to stay home and avoid getting COVID. They’re sending their kids to school, who then get infected and bring it home. The struggle for Zero COVID is essential.

“May Day has always been a symbol for the unity of the working class internationally. I think this year it takes on a bigger significance. The fight against COVID must be a struggle to unify the working class internationally. It is affecting every country, killing thousands of workers.

“I urge all workers to attend. It is the only way forward, against the virus and against war. Everyone is aware of what’s taking place in Ukraine. This has sparked an escalating conflict between the United States and Russia, and it could easily end in a third world war, which has the potential to kill billions of people. Come to the May Day Online Rally!”

**Michael**, a young IT worker in Brisbane, urged other youth and workers in his industry worldwide to join the rally.

“Why are we made to live in fear of nuclear war, pandemics, climate change and other threats to human existence? Why are workers being denied the fair share of the fruits of their labour while their paymasters live in obscene luxury?

“Why are today’s workers and youth being condemned to a precarious existence in a world dominated by danger, crisis and uncertainty, instead of a world of fairness, progress and opportunity as those same people rightfully deserve?

“It is because of all this that I am attending this year’s May Day rally. Not only should my generation not have to put up with all these issues, but they should also be encouraged to fight for an alternative to the system—the capitalist system—that is the source of those same issues.

“And there is an alternative, validated by sound scientific theory and immense historical experience, in the form of world socialism. Please attend the rally and join the struggle for a

better world.”

The WSWS spoke to **Helen** and her husband **Paul**. Helen is a disability support worker in Victoria whose husband was trapped in South Sudan during the pandemic. She said, “My job is very hard. Sometimes we were sent to a client who had COVID. You are afraid for your family, yet you want to go to work, because your life is based on working. You have to work. Your client might have COVID, but you can’t say ‘no,’ you have no choice.

“My husband was trapped overseas for 15 months. I had to manage with my five children by myself. Every morning I woke up and dressed my children at six in the morning. I let my little ones go to family day care and the three eldest ones go to school, and then I had to leave for work. I tried in the lockdown to bring my husband back, but the ticket cost \$6,500 and I couldn’t afford it, so I had to just leave him and focus on how to survive with our children.”

Paul said, “It was terrible. She tried very hard to bring me back to my family. I tried to convince her saying: ‘Look it’s a waste of money, we are not able to find that amount. Let’s focus on how to manage our family.’ That is the way we agreed.

“COVID is in South Sudan but the people are not aware of how to protect themselves, there is a lack of education and there are a lot of cases. My life was based on the support from my wife. Every fortnight she sent me \$50 or \$100. Apart from that, I have siblings and relatives there.

“With the virus and then war, it will be very hard for the world. It is not a Ukrainian war, it is really worldwide. If it continues the way it has been, it will mean that the world will not be the same again. The same way as we saw with the virus, a lot of refugees will be coming globally, not only Ukrainians.

“Workers should come to the May Day rally, because workers should be gathering globally, not only based on Australia. I wish all the workers of the world can raise their voice and it might be heard all over the world.”

**Keith**, a school security guard in Brisbane, said workers needed to unite globally to fight the soaring cost of living, capitalism’s COVID-19 disaster and the threat of another world war.

“Like in Sri Lanka, protests are happening all around the world over the intensity of the food and fuel crisis, but we just don’t hear about most of them. Inflation was everywhere, even before the US-NATO war in Ukraine. There is non-stop inflation because of the pouring of trillions of dollars into the financial markets in the pandemic.

“It’s just lies that inflation was only 3.5 percent and now 1.5 percent in Australia. It is at least 15 percent for rent, food and consumables for families.”

Keith explained that he was still recovering after a week of being laid low by COVID. “I thought it would be mild, like hay fever for 48 hours, but it’s much worse. I had a hyperactive body reaction, elevated heart rates, extreme dehydration and

horrendous cramps.

“By opening everything up, the governments are making it worse. It will keep spreading and mutating. The cases will go through the roof with all the super-spreader events over Easter and the change of season to colder weather.”

Keith blamed US imperialism for the war in Ukraine. “The US is determined to get its hands on the oil, gas and other resources of Russia, plus the Black Sea. This is the beginning of a new world war. People have to look through the humanitarian claims. This is about the oligarchs and corporates seeking profits, not human rights in Ukraine.”

**Jenny**, a personal carer in Brisbane, said: “I will be attending the online May Day rally because the Socialist Equality Party is the only international political party which has an actionable plan out of the catastrophic mess capitalism has made of the world, both socially and environmentally.

“When you watch the mainstream media, all you hear lately is world leaders gunning for war—whether it be by grovelling to join or support NATO against Russia or by proudly announcing new funds for their national armories. It looks and sounds like a military frenzy in the making and it’s impossible not to take seriously.

“Meanwhile, those same leaders worldwide have set COVID-19 loose on their populations by dropping mandates and decimating medical facilities. Nurses and doctors are exhausted when people need them the most.

“If a system of social organisation is supposed to look after its people, capitalism has failed as miserably as slavery and feudalism.

“We need a political party and movement that is conscious of the necessity of abolishing this outdated system and replacing it with genuine socialism. People are already being driven to protest on every continent, and the May Day rally is being held by the SEP leadership for the struggles ahead.”

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