Australian rallies condemn US Supreme Court abortion decision

Our reporters
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Rallies opposing the US Supreme Court overturn of *Roe v Wade* were held in cities around Australia last weekend.

Thousands attended in different cities, including in Sydney, where protestors endured torrential rain. The largest event was held in Melbourne, where about 10,000 people rallied, mostly young women. The attendance reflected an understanding that the Supreme Court's antidemocratic and legally illegitimate attack on abortion rights has international implications.

The organisers of the events, members of the pseudo-left organisation Socialist Alternative, sought to keep the protests within the safe channels of the political establishment.

Speakers at the events included trade union bureaucrats and Greens politicians, together with feminist activists who promoted identity politics. The class issues in the fight for abortion rights were concealed, as was the broader context of the Supreme Court ruling, including the breakdown of American democracy and the Australian-backed war drive against Russia and China.

Several protestors spoke with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters.

In Sydney, **Laura**, a technology consultant, explained why she had come to the rally: "They are taking away women's rights, they are taking away the right to choose. There are so many reasons why women would need or want to have an abortion, and for them to just take away that right completely doesn't make sense to me.

"I also think that there are too many children in the world that aren't looked after so that's also another reason why I think they are making a decision without even thinking about any of the consequences. So there are the women's rights that are being taken away but it is also about the children who are going to suffer as a result of this.

"I've seen that some of the large corporations in America are giving their employees funds to be able to travel to different states, but if you don't work for a large corporation and you are working to try to make ends meet and your employer can't help you either then they are the ones who are going to be impacted and don't have any choice."

Laura explained her initial reaction to the Supreme Court ruling: "It was a bit like when Trump came to power. I was like, 'what, is that for real?,' then I had to read up about it to really understand how deep it went and I'm still in shock to be honest. I just don't understand where it is coming from, why they are doing it, why they are going back 50 years and why they are taking back women's rights and why they are able to do that. That's what is scary.

"I've seen a lot of people saying that this is just the start of taking away people's rights. And then we have to do things like this [demonstrate]. And people said to me 'what is it going to achieve, you coming out and protesting in Australia?' And I said, 'well, imagine what it would look like if we just stood here and said nothing and did nothing and just let all of this happen.' I think we must come together and make a stand. The more people come together, the more voices are heard, the more we will make a difference."

Also in Sydney, **Natalie**, a graphic designer, said she was attending the rally because, "I think it's wrong what's going on in the US, and I think Australia also has a long way to go with abortion. Even though it is accessible, it should be more accessible."

She added, "I think the individuals in the Supreme Court who overturned it are quite old-fashioned—they don't believe in progression." WSWS reporters pointed

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out that the right to abortion was a class issue. Natalie replied, “I think it’s classist to take it away from people. The wealthy will be able to get an abortion, whereas people who can’t afford to travel won’t be able to.”

In Melbourne, a **17-year-old student** attended the rally with a group of school friends.

She explained. “I had an abortion when I was 16 to save my life. I’m a high school student. Having to carry a baby and drop out of high school was not something anyone wants to do. If I was in South Australia at the time, I would have had to carry the baby because it wasn’t legalised then. The fact that a lot of girls in the US are going to have to go through something that I wouldn’t wish on anyone is heart shattering. It’s a fundamental right. It’s not an easy decision but it’s a decision that needs to be made.”

Asked why she thought this had happened in the US, the student replied: “I think that Donald Trump was allowed to nominate three or four Supreme Court leaders and that’s going to heavily affect America in a very negative way.

“You’ve already seen it took them four days from overturning *Roe v Wade* to talking about LGBTQ rights. I don’t think America is a very safe country anymore. With their gun laws, and their lack of women’s rights and fundamental human rights it’s a very scary space to live. I know in Australia we follow a lot of what America does.

“I would like to think that something like that wouldn’t happen here, but abortion was only legalised last year in some parts of Australia. It’s already really hard to get for Aboriginal women and people in Tasmania. It’s very likely that places like Tasmania will be able to criminalise it again and have harsh restrictions on it.”

The young woman also discussed the class issues involved with abortion rights.

“I didn’t have a job when I got my abortion, but my family was able to pay for it,” she said. “Without Medicare it would have cost something like $8,000. As it was, we still had to pay $1,300 because Medicare didn’t cover all of it. It was horrendous. I’m still paying my family back for that. The fact that I had to pay for something that is a human right is very scary.”

Taylor attended the Melbourne rally with Alice and a group of health workers. She said: “The ruling is not going to stop abortion. It’s just going to make it unsafe. People are going to die.”

Alice added, “It perpetuates a cycle of poverty because the people who can afford an abortion will always be able to get one. People who can’t are going to have to raise children they don’t want and they can’t afford. This leaves us with people with more problems.”

Her friend said, “Things have gone backwards. They think they can get away with it now. Even though Trump has gone, his choices are still making decisions for an entire country that he’s no longer in charge of. It’s terrifying.”

Alice continued, “I don’t think that any country is safe. Only a few months ago we had a prime minister whose religious discrimination act was going to put some people in real danger where they would not feel welcome. So it’s not impossible for it to happen anywhere.”

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