

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

South Korea: KMWU shuts down Hyundai Transys strike

The Korean Metal Workers Union (KMWU), representing about 2,800 workers at Hyundai Transys, an affiliate of Hyundai Motor Group, suddenly ended a 30-day strike at the company's auto-transmission Jigok plant in Seosan, South Chungcheong Province.

The union ordered members to return to work on November 11 with no resolution to the workers' pay demands. To prevent a major revolt from workers, the union said it will maintain the struggle and directed members to refuse overtime and extra work until this year's wage and collective bargaining negotiations are concluded.

The workers had been on strike since October 11 for a new pay agreement. Negotiations between Hyundai Transys and the KMWU began in June.

The union wanted a 159,800-won (\$US115) increase in base salary and so-called "performance-based" bonuses of 2 percent of last year's sales. Management argued that the proposed incentive scale is excessive, amounting to twice last year's operating profit, and unacceptable.

The company provides auto transmission units for Hyundai Motor and Kia Corporation. Hyundai was forced during the strike to temporarily reduce production at its Ulsan plant, affecting the Kona model production line. Tranix Corp, a powertrain production subsidiary of Hyundai, shut down its plant in Jigok, South Chungcheong Province, because of the Hyundai Transys walkout. Tranix, which employs about 1,700 workers, said the strike had disrupted the supply of parts needed for production.

India: Tamil Nadu midday meal workers on hunger protest

Midday meal workers went on a hunger strike in front of the Collectors Office in Nagappattinam, Tamil Nadu on Wednesday. Demands included permanent jobs and higher wages on par with other government workers. The welfare minister and education minister met with protesters and gave "assurances" that their demands would be fulfilled.

Madhya Pradesh health department workers in Bhopal demand improved wages and conditions

Madhya Pradesh Health Department workers, including nurses, paramedics and outsourced workers, began a protest on November 11 by wearing black armbands. Their 15 demands included improved wages and conditions. They plan to issue a charter of demands to the chief minister on November 18 and broaden their protest on November 25 if demands are not met.

Woolworths warehouse workers in New South Wales and Victoria strike for pay rise

More than 1,200 United Workers Union (UWU) members from four distribution centres of supermarket giant Woolworths walked off the job for an hour on Tuesday after negotiations for an improved pay offer in a new enterprise agreement failed to reach agreement. Distribution centres affected were Melbourne South Regional, Melbourne Liquor, Wodonga and Erskine Park.

Woolworths supply chain arm, Primary Connect, offered sub-inflation pay rises of 10 percent over three years to workers at the Melbourne South Regional distribution centre; 12.1 percent over four years to Melbourne Liquor centre workers, 7.1 percent over two years to Wodonga centre workers and 12.05 percent over three years to workers at the Erskine Park centre in NSW.

UWU wants annual pay increases ranging from 10 to 12.5 percent annually. It wants a single agreement covering all four distribution centres and all wages lifted to at least \$38 per hour in the first year.

Workers are also demanding the scrapping of Primary Connect's Coaching and Productivity Framework which the union said used engineered standards to discipline or even fire people for not meeting company stipulated speeds of working.

Striking workers held meetings outside their respective distribution centre and voted to approve taking indefinite strike action. Under the terms of the Fair Work Commission's protected action ballot order, the union is required to give seven days' notice of any industrial action. Approved action could include unlimited stoppages of one hour, 24 hours or stoppage of all work for an indefinite duration.

Sydney light rail union suspends pay dispute industrial action

The Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU), representing 250 workers at Sydney Light Rail, suspended industrial action planned to commence on Monday after the state Labor government did a temporary deal with the union. Workers had intended to impose a 10km/h speed limit on all light rail services to force the government to intervene in their dispute with

their employer Transdev over its proposed enterprise agreement.

The union said the 10km/h would be lifted if the government cut passenger fares to 50 cents. The current minimum fare is \$3.20. The government agreed to give passengers four days of free travel from Monday (November 11) if the union suspended industrial action and restarted negotiations with Transdev. RTBU and Transdev met on Wednesday without coming to an agreement. According to the union Transdev has refused to lock in another meeting.

Transdev and the union have been in negotiations for a new agreement for over 18 months. The union claimed that Transdev broke off negotiations three months ago. Workers want a 23 percent pay increase over four years and an additional five days' sick leave. Transdev has offered an 18 percent pay increase over four years.

RTBU announced on Thursday that members were taking part in partial work bans that will not disrupt tram operations. The union said Transdev responded by issuing workers with lockout letters.

Canberra public hospital doctors strike again over salaries and workloads

A group of doctors from the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation (ASMOF) walked off the job and rallied outside the Centenary Hospital in Canberra on November 8 in their dispute with the Australian Capital Territory's (ACT) Labor-Greens government on pay and workloads. The action followed low-level work bans imposed by 300 ASMOF members on September 23 and a series of one-hour stoppages begun on October 3.

ASMOF claimed that ACT doctors' pay has dropped from being among the highest 25 percent in Australia to the second lowest during three years of negotiations, and that the government's 2 percent annual wage increase offer did not match the rising cost of living.

Doctors say that uncompetitive pay and working conditions had contributed to staff shortages and excessive workloads. An ASMOF spokesperson claimed that ACT doctors are up to 10 percent worse off compared with their interstate colleagues.

The government is opposing an application by ASMOF to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to have it act as an independent arbitrator. ASMOF has applied to the FWC to hold a further ballot to allow extension of industrial action.

Nurses at St Vincent's Private Hospitals in Victoria begin industrial action for improved pay and conditions

Over 800 members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation from St Vincent's Private Hospitals, in Victoria have given notice that they will be taking protected industrial action from 7 a.m. on November 18 at its four Victorian facilities.

The ANMF is in dispute with St Vincent's over its proposed enterprise agreement. The federation claimed the proposed agreement fails to address safe patient workloads and ratios, improved allowances and does not contain improvements that were recently included in the 2024–28 public sector nurses and midwives' agreement.

On November 11, 93 percent of members voted for industrial action that could include up to 27 work bans. This could start with 10 different actions that include bans on overtime, taking the full meal break, ban on redeployment between wards, wearing ANMF t-shirts and collecting

administrative data.

Churches of Christ Aged Care nurses in Victoria hold more strikes for pay rise

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) members at the Churches of Christ's Arcadia Aged Care and Oak Towers Aged Care facilities will walk out for four hours from 1 p.m. on November 18 and 19 respectively for a new enterprise agreement in place before a new owner takes over in mid-December. Nine work bans put in place last month will remain.

Nurses want to protect current conditions and jobs and are seeking a decent pay rise to compensate for going four years without a pay rise. Churches of Christ, in consultation with the new owner, have refused to make a pay offer and want to reduce personal leave from 21 days to 10 days for new recruits. The union claims that some nurses at the facilities are earning up \$100 less per week and others \$55 per week less than nurses at other aged care facilities.

ANMF has drafted a sell-out deal that was presented to the owner on Thursday. The offer includes a variation to the existing agreement (expired in 2020) that maintains current wage rates and brings allowances and penalties up to a standard which will allow any variation or new enterprise agreement to be approved by the Fair Work Commission. Both parties are to meet in the commission on November 19.

Healthscope private hospital nurses in New South Wales strike for pay rise

New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members from Healthscope hospitals in western and south-west Sydney walked off the job for two hours on Thursday in their campaign for a pay rise in a new work agreement. It followed a two-hour strike by 300 NSWNMA members at Healthscope's Northern Beaches Hospital, in Sydney's northern suburb of Frenchs Forest on November 5.

A union spokesperson claimed that Healthscope's 4,000 NSW nurses and midwives are paid 16 percent less than their colleagues in Queensland-based Healthscope hospitals. They also receive less annual, maternity and personal leave than if they were working in public sector hospitals.

The NSWNMA wants an immediate 15 percent pay rise in line with the union's public sector pay claim, mandated nurse/midwife to patient ratios across all wards and units, night shift penalty rates increased from 15 percent to 30 percent and improved leave entitlements.

Ramsay Health Care nurses in new South Wales strike for pay rise

NSWNMA members from Ramsay Health Care's Westmead Hospital, west of Sydney and North Shore Private planned to strike for 24 hours on Friday in opposition to Ramsay's proposed enterprise agreement. NSWNMA members at Ramsay's Lake Macquarie Private Hospital walked out for 24 hours on Monday.

Ad hoc isolated industrial action by NSWNMA members at Ramsay's 70 NSW hospitals began in July when nurses rejected a proposed 11 percent pay increase over a three-year agreement. NSWNMA claimed

their Ramsay members were paid 14 percent less than their Queensland counterparts.

The NSWNMA is calling for an 18 percent pay rise over three years and improvements to conditions, including increases to paid parental and personal leave entitlements, protection of existing conditions and improved staff rostering to reduce workload. Ramsay's latest pay offer to its 5,000-strong workforce was only 16.6 percent over a four-year agreement. The nurses' last pay rise was a meagre 2.4 percent in July 2022 when the consumer price index (CPI) was 5.6 percent.

Twenty four-hour strikes are planned for next week at Ramsay's Port Macquarie Private and Wollongong Private, and a four-hour stoppage at St George Private, in Sydney.

Western Australian court security workers strike for higher pay

Last week, about 200 security workers from Ventia, which provides court security, custodial services and prisoner transport under contract from the state government, walked off the job for four hours over low pay. The workers are members of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) which is negotiating a new enterprise agreement with Ventia.

Workers want improvement in safety and a decent pay rise. TWU claimed Ventia workers are paid up to 24 percent less than those of their competitors who do the same job.



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