

# 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.*

## India: Outsourced Vijayawada municipal sanitation workers strike for better conditions

Around 3,000 outsourced sanitation workers employed under the Andhra Pradesh Corporation for Outsourced Services (APCOS) at the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) stopped work on July 13. They want inclusion in the single mother supporting funds scheme, social security pensions, job security, insurance, and reduced work burden.

Meanwhile, around 900 outsourced VMC workers in horticulture, streetlights, drainage, water supply, drivers, cleaners and chain men have been on strike since June 25. They want wages of 21,000 rupees (\$US244) and 24,000 rupees for skilled workers. Their current monthly wages are 12,000 rupees and 15,000 rupees respectively. The Centre for Indian Trade Unions called the strike.

## Odisha dairy workers strike for permanent jobs

Odisha State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited (Omfed) workers began an indefinite strike at Naraj in Cuttack on Tuesday. Over 786 workers from 11 plants in the state were involved. The strikers want permanent jobs for about 200 workers employed for over 25 years as contract workers, equal pay for equal work, filling all vacant posts and improved workplace safety and job security. The strike was called by the Utkal Omfed Workers Union.

The union says that Omfed has ignored the workers, despite several representations and writings as of May 28. A senior worker said the inhuman practices had to be withdrawn and authorities must act promptly.

## Postal workers at Hubballi, Karnataka protest for better conditions

Postal workers at Hubballi, Karnataka protested on Tuesday by wearing black badges at work. They are demanding group medical health insurance of 1 million rupees (\$US11,640) and another 41 demands. They plan to hold another protest on July 22 and an indefinite strike on August 18. The workers are organised by the Bharatiya Postal Employees Federation.

## West Bengal child development workers demonstrate in Kolkata

Child Development Services workers protested in Kolkata on Tuesday to protest low wages, lack of benefits and issues related to digitisation of their work. Workers maintained their protest in the face of violent intervention from police.

The protest was organised by the West Bengal Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, the All-India United Trade Union Centre and the union of the Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist).

## Cleanaway waste management workers strike at Chevron in Western Australia

Australian Workers Union (AWU) members employed by waste management contractor Cleanaway at Chevron's Gorgon and Wheatstone oil and gas facilities in Western Australia have begun a series of 24-hour stoppages over Cleanaway's proposed enterprise agreement. The 18 workers voted unanimously on June 24 to begin industrial action starting on July 4.

The workers are represented by the Offshore Alliance (OA), comprising the AWU and the Maritime Union of Australia, who claim Cleanaway stripped \$30,000 from the workers' annual pay when it took on the new Chevron contract in 2021. According to the OA, when penalty rates are excluded from the current pay mix, Cleanaway is paying workers engaged on major hazard facilities a base wage of only \$33.45 per hour.

OA claims Cleanaway has refused to improve on its "minimum standard" offer. Neither side has made details of the offer public.

## Komatsu excavator maintenance workers in New South Wales strike for pay rise

About 90 maintenance workers from the Komatsu mining equipment maintenance depot at Rutherford, New South Wales walked off the job for one hour on July 12, their first-ever strike, to demand an improved pay offer in the company's proposed enterprise agreement.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union members voted near unanimously on June 25 to approve taking protected industrial action that could include 23 work bans, like a ban on overtime and stoppages of various lengths ranging from one hour to one week.

Workers want wages parity with their colleagues at other Komatsu sites at Moss Vale and Rockhampton doing similar work.

## **Peabody's Helensburgh coal miners walk out again in New South Wales**

Immediately after returning to work following a 13-day lockout, without pay, 160 Mining and Energy Union (MEU) members at Peabody's Metropolitan underground coal mine in Helensburgh, New South Wales stopped work for 12 hours on the July 9 evening shift and for 12 hours on the following day shift. The MEU said that further action will be decided on a shift-by-shift basis.

The workers, who are in dispute with the US-based company over pay, began low-level industrial action on June 18. The company responded by immediately locking them out for seven days, and again for six days on July 4.

Peabody claimed it offered the workers a 13.5 percent pay rise over three years which would lift annual income to around \$200,000. The union disputed this, saying the pay offer was only 10.5 percent over three years.

Workers want at least a 15 percent wage increase over three years to compensate for union-negotiated, below-inflation pay increases for the past three years. They are demanding a one-off market rate increase of \$1.50 per hour, plus a \$4 increase to crib payments, and retention of a longstanding job security clause in the agreement. The security clause prevents permanent jobs from being replaced by labour-hire contractors.

## **Bestbar steel reinforcement workers in Victoria demand improved pay offer**

About 60 workers from Bestbar's steel reinforcement cut-and-bend facilities in Victoria began protected industrial action on Monday to demand an improved pay offer in the company's proposed enterprise agreement. This is their first industrial action in 20 years.

After six months of negotiation with the Australian Workers Union, Bestbar offered an 8.5 percent pay rise over three years. Workers want 10 percent over 3 years. Their last pay increase was only 3 percent in April 2024, below the official inflation rate at the time of 3.8 percent.

## **Virtus Health IVF nurses in Queensland strike for pay increase**

About 50 Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union (QNMU) members at six Virtus Health's Queensland Fertility Group IVF facilities in Brisbane and Mackay walked off the job for four hours on Wednesday to demand a pay rise in a new agreement. Following nearly a year of failed negotiations the nurses voted unanimously on May 28 to approve taking industrial action.

The latest action is in addition to work bans imposed in early June after 90 percent of nurses rejected the company's pay rise offer, saying it failed to bring their pay in line with Virtus Health colleagues interstate and failed to keep up with the rising cost of living. Virtus' pay rise offer is 10.5 percent over three years. The nurses want 13.5 percent over three years.

## **Western Australian court security workers strike for improved pay and safety**

On July 11, security workers from Ventia, which provides court security, custodial services and prisoner transport under contract to the state government, walked off the job for eight hours over low pay and unsafe staffing levels. It was their fourth strike since November last year.

The workers are members of the Transport Workers Union (TWU), which is dragging out negotiations for a new enterprise agreement with Ventia. The union accused Ventia of reneging on key safety agreements and other previously agreed demands. Workers want a decent pay increase saying they are paid up to 24 percent less than those of their competitors from G4S who do the same job.

## **New Zealand nurses vote for nationwide strike**

More than 36,000 New Zealand nurses, midwives and health care assistants have voted to strike for 24 hours over a longrunning employment contract dispute. The NZ Nurses Organisation (NZNO) balloted members on "possible" industrial action which is scheduled, but not yet confirmed, to start with a 24-hour strike on July 30. A series of other actions may follow.

Health NZ (HNZ) is offering a 3 percent pay rise over two years, which would be below inflation at 2.5 percent per annum, plus two payments of \$325. The union declared the offer was a "massive backward step" for the health system and patients, and there were "very strong indications" members will want to strike.

The NZNO has also accused HNZ of putting money ahead of safety by dropping a safe staffing agreement from its latest contract offer. Negotiations, which began last October, have stalled over what the union called "big ticket items" centred on public safety. In 2024, 47 percent of all wards were understaffed 20 percent of the time, leaving nurses overworked and burnt out.

The NZNO has dragged out the dispute for ten months. If the next strike goes ahead it will be only the second nationwide strike since last December. Since then, the union has only organised intermittent, isolated stoppages at local levels.

The senior doctors' union, the Association of Medical Specialists (ASMS), which is also in a pay dispute with HNZ, has done the same. Neither union has mobilised a unified struggle of health sector workers against the far-right National Party-led government.



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