

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and New Zealand

21 November 2025

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

India: Punjab transport workers strike for 5 hours

Contract workers of the Punjab Roadways, PUNBUS and Pepsu Road Transportation Corporation (PRTC) carried out a five-hour strike in Patiala on November 17. Their main demands were for permanent jobs and to end the privatisation of bus services.

Due to the strike, the government postponed the tendering for private bus operators and announced a wage increase of 5 percent for both contract and permanent workers.

Uttarakhand: State government workers strike for permanent jobs

Around 22,000 public sector workers in Uttarakhand began strike action on November 12, with some 2,000 taking part in a protest in the city of Dehradun. Workers are demanding permanent jobs, as the Supreme Court ordered the state government to implement in October 2024.

A large number of contracted and outsourced employees are engaged through Uttarakhand Purva Sainik Nigam Limited in various departments across the state. Ahead of the last election, the state government promised to grant these workers permanency.

Instead, the government of Uttarakhand on Wednesday ordered a six-month ban on strikes by its employees, invoking the Uttar Pradesh Essential Services Maintenance Act 1966.

Tamil Nadu: Police forcibly remove sanitation workers on hunger strike

Four female sanitation workers, who have been protesting for the past four months against the privatisation of solid waste management, and for other demands, launched a hunger strike on November 18 outside the Ambattur Municipal Corporation office.

The striking sanitation workers, from zones five and six of the Greater Chennai Corporation, were forcibly evicted by police from the Ripon Building, where they had been staging an indefinite protest.

Later, the Madras High Court ruled that four workers at a time could carry out an indefinite strike, inside the Ambattur union office. The court allowed an additional 50 people to be present as supporters or visitors at

the protest site, with regular visits by a doctor to monitor the health of the hunger strikers.

Bangladesh: Fertiliser workers demand factory reopening

Workers from Ashuganj Fertiliser and Chemical Company Limited in Brahmanbaria district, eastern Bangladesh, held a protest rally and march on Monday to demand the resumption of production. The factory has been closed since March.

Workers also demanded that the company abolish its two-tier wage scale. They said they would block the Dhaka-Sylhet highway if their demands were not met.

Sri Lanka: Public sector doctors protest budget neglect

The Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) began a nationwide protest Monday, withdrawing certain medical support services, saying the needs of doctors have been ignored in this year's budget. More than 23,000 doctors across the country have joined the protest.

A GMOA spokesperson stated that doctors will no longer issue prescriptions for medicines unavailable in hospitals. Previously, it was common practice for physicians to recommend and prescribe such medications for purchase from external pharmacies.

In addition, doctors will cease recommending laboratory tests that are not conducted within hospital facilities. Although some tests are available internally, delays are frequent, and patients requiring urgent care have often been referred to private labs based on doctors' recommendations.

The GMOA also declared that doctors will not examine patients without the presence of an assistant, as there is an acute shortage of nurses and junior staff in the hospitals.

Sri Lankan School Development Officers maintain their protest

Hundreds of School Development Officers (SDOs) launched a sit-down protest in front of the Presidential Secretariat on Sunday.

They are demanding immediate recruitment into the national teaching service. The SDOs, who are already qualified graduates, are opposed to sitting for recruitment examinations, citing that their existing credentials and service experience qualify them for direct entry.

Viraj Manaranga, secretary of the School Development Officers Union,

stated on November 19 that the protest would be temporarily halted since the Prime Minister had agreed to a discussion.

Ambulance Victoria administrative staff start industrial action

On Tuesday morning, Ambulance Victoria (AV) administrative workers began a campaign of protected industrial action in support of their wages and conditions claims for a new enterprise agreement.

After a near-unanimous strike vote on November 12, the Ambulance Managers and Professionals Association (AMPA) called a range of limited bans, affecting recruitment, training, procurement, rostering, and statutory reporting.

AMPA says wages have risen just 2 percent per annum over the past four years, an effective wage cut of at least 5 percent compared with inflation.

The union says it may call further industrial action if AV doesn't make an improved pay offer.

Work bans at Bendigo Rail Workshops

Around 30 workers at the Bendigo Rail Workshops (BRW) in Victoria have begun industrial action, including bans on overtime, callouts, and night shifts. Workers voted near-unanimously to strike earlier this month.

The workers, covered by the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU), are opposing an attempt by the company to slash their existing conditions in a new enterprise agreement. BRW wants to eliminate overtime penalties, restrictions on the number of casual employees, short-notice afternoon and night shift penalties. The company is also refusing to include backpay in the new agreement.

The AMWU hasn't publicly put forward a specific wage demand, merely claiming that it will not agree to trade-offs.

CSR plasterboard workers locked out in Melbourne

At 11:59 p.m. on November 14, 61 plasterboard manufacturing workers at CSR Building Products in Yarraville, Melbourne walked off the job and began an indefinite strike.

Effectively, they have been locked out by the company, which refused to pay workers who undertook so-called "protected" industrial action, consisting of limited stoppages and bans on overtime, call backs, administrative tasks, and training.

Workers told the *World Socialist Web Site* CSR only pays \$38 per hour, while workers at a nearby factory doing similar work receive \$46 per hour. They said CSR had offered nominal pay rises of 4 percent in each of the first two years and 3.5 percent in the third and fourth year.

The Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) is seeking just 4 percent per annum increases, plus a \$1 increase to the skills allowance. This is far short of what is needed to keep up with the soaring cost of living, especially given the workers have not had a wage rise since October 2024.

Dozens of University of Newcastle educators strike and protest

On Wednesday, dozens of University of Newcastle (UoN) educators held a 24-hour strike and rallied outside the New South Wales state parliament in Sydney. They were protesting the state and federal Labor governments' higher education policies and the UoN's "Business Improvement Plan" to cut 140 jobs and a dozen courses.

The educators, covered by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) are also seeking improved wages and conditions in a new enterprise agreement.

Earlier this year, NTEU members decided to pursue their wage demands with industrial action after rejecting the UoN's offer of a 12-month extension of the current agreement and a 3.45 percent wage rise in March 2026 as totally inadequate.

Workers are seeking a wage rise of 20 percent over four years, improved job security, improved redundancy provisions, and for a guarantee that no individual will be subject to UoN's "organisational change process" more than once during the life of the agreement.

Education workers have seen their working conditions collapse over the past decade, a process that has been overseen and enforced by the NTEU bureaucracy. At the UoN, the NTEU admits 40 percent of permanent educator jobs have been casualised and another 30 percent of educators are in insecure work.

Nurses strike at Healthscope in Victoria

On Thursday, nurses employed by private hospital operator Healthscope stopped work for four hours, with about 600 health workers rallying outside the company's hospitals in Melbourne and Geelong.

The nurses, covered by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), have rejected a company pay offer they say would be inadequate to deliver parity with their counterparts in other private hospitals or the public sector. Currently, Healthscope pays some 2.5–3.5 percent less than the public sector, according to the union.

The nurses are demanding improved staffing levels and for in-charge-nurses to have no patient load. They are also opposing salary packaging provisions in Healthscope's proposed agreement that would see the vast majority of the tax benefit go to the company, not workers. Under Healthscope's plan, employees could receive salary packaging benefits worth up to \$11,660 per year, but would be forced to return 90 percent of this to the company.

New Zealand firefighters strike

About 2,000 firefighters across New Zealand (NZ) held a one-hour strike on November 21 against pay cuts, staff shortages, faulty equipment and an ongoing cost-cutting drive. Pickets were held in major cities around the country.

Last month, members of the NZ Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) rejected a 5.1 percent pay increase over three years, i.e., less than 2 percent per year, which would be a major pay cut with annual inflation at 3 percent and food prices having gone up nearly 5 percent.

The NZPFU has sought to limit and contain the struggle, with the union cancelling a strike that had been scheduled for November 7 based on vague claims of progress in talks with Fire and Emergency New Zealand

(FENZ). In fact, FENZ has proposed a restructure aimed at saving \$50 million from its annual costs, including by cutting as many as 140 jobs.

New Zealand nurses continue industrial action

Some 37,500 nurses and other public healthcare workers in hospitals around the country began two weeks of industrial action on November 18. Members of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) are refusing to accept redeployment or changes to their rosters or additional hours or shifts.

Tens of thousands of healthcare workers joined the historic strike by more than 100,000 public sector workers on October 23, in opposition to unsafe levels of staffing and the government's pay offer of just 3 percent over two years. NZNO President Anne Daniels has previously called for an increase above the 3 percent inflation rate, which would still in fact be a pay cut relative to the cost of food and other expenses.

Air New Zealand workers vote to strike

About 1,200 Air New Zealand cabin crew have voted to take strike action, the union E t? announced on November 18. A date has not been set, but E t? director Michael Wood said it would take place before December 17. The strike would affect both domestic and international flights.

Wood said the airline's workers were employed on as little as \$60,000 a year and their pay has not kept up with soaring living costs. The union, however, has not announced any specific demands. Wood appealed to the company—which is 51 percent owned by the government—to return to negotiations, saying that E t? would "work hard ... to prevent any strike action."

Paint company workers to strike

Hundreds of workers at New Zealand paint company Resene will strike next Monday and Tuesday after rejecting a pay offer of just 84 cents an hour. The company employs about 200 people in Upper and Lower Hutt.

Protests are scheduled at Resene's head office in Lower Hutt. The action follows a previous strike on October 17.

The E t? union is calling for workers to be given \$28.95 per hour, which the union bureaucracy describes as a "living wage," about \$5.50 above the legal minimum wage. In fact, amid soaring living costs, it is still below what would be required to sustain a family. A union official declared in a statement that it would only cost Resene about \$200,000 to meet this demand.



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