

Australia: Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee supports striking US nurses and healthcare workers

Our correspondent
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The Australian Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee (HWRFC) met last week and unanimously passed a resolution in support of striking New York nurses, as well as the 31,000 nurses and healthcare workers and 3,000 pharmacy and laboratory workers on strike at Kaiser Permanente in California and Hawaii.

The HWRFC meeting, which was attended by doctors, nurses, pathology and disability support workers, as well as other hospital services employees, heard a report on the determined industrial action of New York nurses and their counterparts at Kaiser Permanente in California and Hawaii, and the desperate efforts of the trade union leadership to isolate and betray these workers.

The meeting discussed the broader political context, including the Australian Labor government's decision to roll out the red carpet for Israeli war criminal and president Isaac Herzog, and the brutal repression of a Sydney protest against his visit just days before.

The HWRFC meeting unanimously passed the following resolution:

We, the Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee (Australia), express our full support and solidarity with striking New York nurses, as well as Kaiser Permanente nurses, pharmacy and laboratory workers who have joined strikes in California and Hawaii.

We condemn the role of the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) leadership, which is seeking to push through sell-out agreements including a 12 percent wage "increase" over three years—well below nurses' demand for 30

percent—and which will do nothing to improve dire working conditions.

We commend the formation of the New York Nurses Rank-and-File Committee as a practical and democratically controlled mechanism through which nurses can advance their struggle.

Nurses in the United States and Australia face a shared crisis: chronic understaffing, eroding pay and benefits and the subordination of patient care to corporate profit. These are not isolated problems but the product of a global, profit-driven assault on public health.

Across Australia and New Zealand, thousands of nurses have engaged in industrial action in recent years to improve wages, conditions and staffing levels. The union bureaucracies have played the same role here as in the US—calling off strikes, limiting and isolating action, and negotiating sell-out deals behind closed doors.

We pledge to publicly share information about the New York and Kaiser strikes with health workers in Australia and New Zealand and call on them to actively support this struggle. The fight for safe staffing, living wages and democratic control of strikes is an international struggle. United, nurses can defeat management and their collaborators in the unions.

Yours in solidarity,

The Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee

Following the meeting, attendees gave further

messages of support to the nurses.

A pathology worker from Victoria said: “I want to express my full support for the striking nurses, pharmacy and laboratory workers in the US. Your fight is deeply personal to me.

“The majority of pathology employees in my workplace recently voted for industrial action to demand a better enterprise bargaining agreement. We were prepared to strike for better conditions and fair demands. But the Health Workers Union cancelled the strike that members had voted for. No fight was organised. Instead, decisions were made behind closed doors, and we were effectively sold out without any of our key demands being met.

“As health workers, we face chronic understaffing, increasing workloads and wages that fail to keep up with the rising cost of living. Patient care is constantly subordinated to budgets and corporate interests. This is not just an American problem or an Australian problem; it is global. What is happening in New York, where nurses are being pressured to accept agreements far below their demands, reflects the same pattern we experienced here. When workers vote to fight and are blocked by union officials, it becomes clear that we need new, democratic structures that are directly controlled by workers ourselves.

“I stand with you because your struggle represents the determination of healthcare workers everywhere to take back control of our conditions and defend both our livelihoods and our patients. Your fight is our fight.”

A respiratory scientist from NSW said: “I fully endorse the HWRFC resolution supporting striking nurses in the United States. This struggle is crucial—not just for the lives of the nurses, who deserve safe and effective working conditions and pay that can lift them out of the current economic pressures they experience—but as a fight that can be a turning point for the working class more broadly, to advance a unified movement against the Trump administration and all those supporting its criminal regime.

“The working class is seeing living standards decline, including access to quality healthcare. Therefore, striking workers in other industries across the US—from teachers to rail and dock workers to auto workers—need to unite and coordinate their fight. This can only be done independently of the union leadership, which has a long history of betraying workers’ interests. The

formation of the New York Nurses’ Rank-and-File Committee is a major step forward.”

A disability support worker from NSW said: “I commend and support the striking nurses in New York, California and Hawaii. Their courageous strikes show strength in numbers and persistence. It is heartening to read about growing solidarity from other sections of US health workers, such as technicians and pharmacists.

“These strikes, which have proceeded despite the union leaderships’ attempts to limit them, coincide with growing calls for a general strike against Trump’s fascistic ICE operations in US cities. Workers and students are becoming increasingly involved in the struggle against the profit-driven nature of health services, the dismantling of public health measures in the US, ICE terror and growing austerity as governments prepare for war.

“What is happening in the US resonates with events in Australia—strikes by nurses and growing authoritarian measures, including police brutality. In both countries, unions attempt to channel mass anger into appeals to the Democrats in the US and to Labor governments in Australia, all of whom represent and support the same capitalist oligarchy. Organising independently of the unions, and across sectors, in internationally affiliated rank-and-file committees is the only way forward.”



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