

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: Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation female workers protest

Female employees of Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) protested at Dharna Chowk in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Organised by the RTC Women Workers' Convening, there are 7,000 women working as full time, part time and outsourced staff at the corporation.

Their demands include childcare leave and monthly special leave, an end to forced overtime, improved restroom facilities, revised running schedules, formation of sexual harassment prevention committees, strict action against harassment of women conductors, duty concessions for women over 50 years, steps to ensure that their duties end before 9 p.m. and installation of conductor doors in all buses.

Workers complained that work pressure and discrimination had increased, particularly after the implementation of the Stree Shakti scheme, which provides free statewide bus travel for women, girls and transgender people.

Telangana ASHA workers protest in Hyderabad for wage rise

Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers protested in Hyderabad on February 22 to demand a fixed monthly wage of 18,000 rupees (\$US200) and permanent jobs. Workers were arrested and terrorised by police during the demonstration, which was called by the Telangana ASHA Workers Association. The association said 28,000 ASHA workers deliver health services at facilities in marginalised communities and to rural workers throughout Telangana but are not paid proper wages and benefits.

The workers held an indefinite strike during September and October 2023 during the previous state administration. They said that although the Indian National Congress party had come to power in December 2023 with promises for ASHA workers, workers' demands had not been granted. ASHA workers had called for 5 million rupees insurance coverage and 50,000 rupees towards funeral expenses, and retirement benefits had not been implemented, workers said.

Private hospital nurses in Kerala strike for pay rise

Private hospital nurses from across Kerala stopped work February 21 to demand higher wages. About 500 marched through Thrissur city and protested near Sakthan Stand. The United Nurses Association coordinated the strike, demanding an increase of their monthly wage from 20,000 rupees (\$US220) to the basic minimum of 40,000 rupees.

Indian Oil Corporation Limited contract workers in Haryana strike for better conditions

Contract workers at the Indian Oil Corporation Limited's plant at Panipat, Haryana protested inside the plant on February 23 to demand a reduction of work hours from 12 to 8 hours, timely payment of wages and maintenance of essential services at the site. The protest became violent after authorities called in the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) to stop the protest. The number of striking workers increased because of the CISF intervention.

Assam tea estate workers demand unpaid Durga Pooja bonus

Ingrijan Tea estate workers in Assam protested on February 24 over the unpaid Durga Pooja bonus. The workers had been promised a bonus of 20 percent for the festival by the Andrew Yule Group management. They were paid only 12 percent in September and then promised the rest by January this year. This did not happen, however. Workers said they would intensify the struggle if their bonus was not soon paid.

Sri Lankan customs officers protest six-year promotion delay

Members of the Customs Trade Union Alliance (CTUA) protested on Tuesday outside the Customs Head Office, wearing black armbands to highlight a six-year delay in pending promotions, along with several other unresolved demands. As part of the initial phase of industrial action, customs officers across the country are wearing black armbands while on duty.

The union stated that despite repeatedly raising these concerns with the relevant authorities, no meaningful solutions have been offered. The prolonged delay, they noted, has caused significant frustration among workers and disrupted career progression within the department.

Sri Lankan state university non-academic workers hold national protest

Non-academic workers from state universities protested across Sri Lanka on Wednesday, citing unresolved long-standing grievances. The University Trade Unions Coordination Committee demanded that authorities take immediate action.

A union representative said non-academic staff members from all state universities and affiliated institutions struck on August 20, 2025 demanding the restoration of allowances and overtime payments which were supposed to be cut under the Dissanayake government's 2026 budget proposals.

Queensland public sector trades workers resume industrial action

Hundreds of state government Building Trades Group workers from QHealth and QBuild resumed industrial action this week after rejecting the Liberal-National government's latest pay offer in a new enterprise agreement. Workers from QHealth walked off the job and protested outside the health minister's electoral office in Brisbane on February 19, followed by a one-hour strike by QBuild workers on Wednesday over the government's "blatant disregard for a fair and reasonable offer."

The workers, represented by four unions—the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Construction Forestry Maritime and Energy Union, Electrical Trades Union and the Plumbers Union—began industrial action in September with a 24-hour strike and rally in Brisbane followed by ad hoc stoppages which also included workers from Transport and Main Roads.

A union spokesperson said it had been six months since the current agreement expired, nine months of negotiations, and 18 months since their members' last pay rise, with the latest offer lower than what other government employees are receiving. The workers also want a 36-hour week to bring them into line with white-collar public servants.

Experience Co. skydiving instructors continue strike action

The strike by 130 skydiving instructors from the global tourism giant Experience Co. entered its eighth day on February 23. The action affected the company's operation at eight sites in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) members first walked off the job in November in opposition to the company's proposed cuts to pay and conditions in their first-ever enterprise agreement in the industry.

The AWU claimed parts of the proposed agreement included cuts of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 per year, and a reduction to the instructors' minimum wage from \$57,000 to \$49,000 through a new low "per jump" piece rate. The union said the cuts would undermine the safety of every customer and instructor. Experience Co. employs over 1,000 workers.

Western Australian firefighters continue industrial action

United Professional Firefighters Union (UPFU-WA branch) members are maintaining industrial action begun in October against the Cooke Labor government's low base wage rise offer of 40 cents an hour on top of its 5, 4 and 3.75 percent annual increase in its proposed enterprise agreement. The union wants the base rate increased by at least \$2 an hour to bring wages into line with other frontline public sector agreements.

The government has not changed its offer, despite 22 negotiation meetings since last March. As well as a higher base wage rate, UPFU members want improved fatigue management, better health and safety protections, specialist capability allowances and expanded leadership training.

In December, the WA Industrial Relations Commission (WAIRC) ordered the union to end 13 industrial bans, including limiting overtime hours to 24 hours per work cycle. In return, the government started paying the 5 percent increase from December 12.

Although the WAIRC has already placed restrictions on the firefighters' industrial action, the UPFU has called on the commission to take over the entire negotiating process through a little-used process known as an "enterprise order." This gives the commission the power to draw up a new pay deal and issue a legally binding pay deal or agreement, based on evidence provided by both sides.

Tasmanian public sector health workers reimpose work bans

On Wednesday, Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) members employed in Tasmania's public health system reinstated 127 work bans they suspended last week after the Liberal state government gave a written commitment that it would begin "intense" negotiations with an improved pay rise offer of 4 percent in a one-year agreement. The HACSU represents hospital support staff, pathology workers, allied health professionals, cleaners, food services staff and trades people. Fresh negotiations were due to begin on Thursday.

Following the week of "intense" negotiations the HACSU accused the government of not just renegeing on previous commitments but demanding "significant cuts to long-held conditions that have never been mentioned in over 12 months of this process."

A government spokesperson said the proposal offered 3 percent increases in years one and two, plus structural reforms, and a 2.75 percent increase in year three. The latest (December quarter) annualised consumer price index (CPI) rate for Hobart, Tasmania's capital, is 3.8 percent, meaning the offer is a real pay cut.

The HACSU is participating in a wider industrial campaign of public sector workers including teachers, health workers, firefighters, child safety workers, park rangers and others for higher pay. In November, the HACSU, along with the Australian Education Union and the Community and Public Sector Union, opposed the government's proposed 3 percent pay rise in a one-year agreement with no improvement in chronic staffing shortages and workload pressures.

Early childhood educators in Victoria strike for improved pay and conditions

On Thursday, about 1,500 kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators from across Victoria stopped work and rallied outside the Melbourne Town Hall as part of their long-running campaign against the deepening workforce and workload crisis engulfing the sector. It was their

second strike in five months.

Australian Education Union (AEU) members want a wage rise of around 35 percent over four years, to bring their pay closer to schoolteachers. Other demands are for measures to address severe workloads and administrative burdens, improvements to job security and career progression. The union says poor pay rates and high workloads are contributing to low workforce retention and exploitation of the remaining workers who have had to endure increasing unpaid overtime, extra planning, assessment and compliance tasks.

Their current agreement expired in September 2024, leaving thousands of workers without a wage increase for two years while living costs have continued to climb. The AEU has allowed negotiations to drag on for 18 months, claiming that the government has refused to put a fair and reasonable offer on the table.

The stoppage comes just weeks before the state's 45,000 public school teachers and education support staff are due to hold a 24-hour statewide stoppage on March 24. The AEU is trying to keep the two struggles separated to avoid a unified fight against the state government and the financial interests it serves.

Aruma disability care workers in Victoria begin industrial action in wage dispute

Close to 500 disability care workers employed by the federal Labor government's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provider Aruma in Victoria have begun protected industrial action over failed negotiations for a new enterprise agreement. Aruma provides specialised care and group home accommodation for 5,000 NDIS recipients along the east coast of Australia.

Industrial action involves work bans imposed on February 20. These include not completing vehicle logbooks, non-participation in employer-initiated workplace changes or restructures, roster reviews and a ban on data entry and collection of statistics.

Meanwhile, the Jacinta Allan state government on December 31 stopped paying subsidies to care providers, including Aruma, for group homes for people with disabilities. NDIS hasn't filled the gap, leaving a funding shortfall. To force workers to subsidise profit losses, Aruma has applied to the Fair Work Commission to have the "Aruma Disability Services Agreement Victoria 2022–2025" terminated. If successful, frontline care workers will be forced into the minimum federal award conditions on lower pay and reduced entitlements.

New Zealand shellfish processing workers strike

Shellfish processing workers at Sanford's Havelock site on the South Island struck for 24 hours on February 18, after months of negotiations failed to reach an agreement.

The E t? union has been in bargaining with Sanford since June 2025. Talks have now reached an impasse, with the company pushing for significant clawbacks while offering a pay rise that would leave workers worse off in real terms.

Sanford is seeking to cut long-service leave entitlements, remove some workers from coverage of the collective agreement, and reduce conditions that have been in place for years. The company's pay offer sits below inflation, meaning workers would effectively be taking a pay cut during a cost-of-living crisis.

The workers are employed across a range of shellfish processing roles at the Havelock site. An E t? delegate said workers on the boats are having the same problems. The new CEO had published a newsletter "telling us he wanted Sanford to become a billion-dollar company, but there's nothing in there about wages going up," he said.



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