

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

27 March 2026

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

India: Punjab community health workers protest reaching two weeks

Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers in Tarn Taran, Punjab, protested at the Civil Surgeon's Office on Wednesday for the ninth day in a row, seeking better wages. The protest was called by ASHA Workers and Facilitators Union. The workers currently receive a meagre 2,500 rupees (\$27) per month. They said their protest would continue until March 28. Workers have threatened to strike if their demands are not met by the Chief Minister.

India: Transport workers protest in Ludhiana, Punjab

Employees of Punjab Roadways, PUNBUS, and the Pepsu Road Transport Corporation held a rally to raise concerns about privatisation and salaries on March 23. The protesters, members of the PRTC Contract Workers' Union, demanded a halt to all privatisations and called on the Punjab government to expand the number of buses to improve public transport.

They also urged the government to end the contract system, under which contractors are deducting employees' provident fund and state insurance contributions and making unauthorised salary cuts. Despite pre-election promises to abolish the contract system and make workers permanent employees, this has not been done.

Karnataka: Sanitation workers protest for better wages and benefits

Sanitation workers from across Mandya protested outside the district panchayat [council] office on March 23. They demanded immediate implementation of government orders on minimum wages, housing and welfare benefits. The protest, called by the Sanitation Workers' Association, accused officials of denying workers their entitlements. Workers continue to receive between 12,000 rupees (\$128) and 14,000 rupees per month, well below the minimum wage of 21,501 rupees. They also claim authorities have not paid provident fund benefits, provided housing, or extended the 2 million rupees insurance and gratuity benefits to families of deceased or retired workers.

Karnataka: Sanitation workers hold mass sickout in Bengaluru

Sanitation workers, who collect household waste, held a mass sickout on March 23 across 50 wards in the city of Bengaluru. The contract workers took the action to protest what they say are demands from Bengaluru Solid Waste Management Limited that workers carry out waste segregation, in violation of laws against manual scavenging. The workers defied the Essential Services Maintenance Act in carrying out the sickout.

Tamil Nadu: Samsung workers protest for reinstatement of suspended workers

Over 500 Samsung workers and their families set out on March 22 on a protest march from Sriperumbudur to the State Secretariat at Fort St George in Chennai. Within minutes and barely 300 metres from their starting point, they were detained by police and were not released until that evening.

The protest was demanding the reinstatement of workers who were suspended from the company's Kancheepuram plant 13 months ago. Management has not taken any steps to reinstate the 27 employees, who were suspended for taking part in a demonstration by hundreds of workers that sought higher wages and formal recognition of their union. The company stated that the 27 workers had led the action and were "suspended temporarily, and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action following a formal enquiry."

Queensland's Glencore copper refinery stops wages of workers involved in industrial action

The Electrical Trades Union (ETU) has reported workers at Glencore's copper refinery in Townsville participating in lawful protected industrial bans have been threatened with having their entire daily wages stopped by the company.

On March 13 about 350 members of the ETU, Australian Workers' Union (AWU) and the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) walked off the job after nearly a year of now deadlocked negotiations with Glencore over wages and conditions.

Earlier that month workers rejected an Enterprise Agreement (EA) offer from Glencore. Glencore's unionised workers voted by more than 90 percent to pursue their EA demands with strikes and bans on certain maintenance and administrative tasks, and on overtime and call-outs.

Following the March 13 walk-out, industrial action has escalated from

4-hour stoppages to 24-hour strikes alongside the ongoing work bans. Glencore has told workers they will not be paid for full 12-hour shifts they had worked if they engage in even minor bans.

Glencore workers say their wages lag significantly behind those at other comparable sites, with electricians reportedly earning up to 30 percent below local market rates.

The ETU says its members have been without a wage rise since the previous EA expired in May 2025.

Glencore had offered approximately 13 percent spread across four years, which is well below inflation. The unions are calling for a 15 percent wage increase, then annual increases of roughly 5 percent. They say low wages are behind chronic understaffing and increasing use of contractors, which threatens job security. Further industrial action is expected.

Academic workers at the University of Technology Sydney strike for 24 hours

On March 19, academic workers and professional staff at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) went on strike for 24 hours, rallying from 8:00 a.m. alongside supporters across the university campus.

Members of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) are taking action in support of their demands for a new Enterprise Agreement (EA). Negotiations began in 2025, involving both the NTEU and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). Management has resisted workers' demands, which include better job security, wages and workloads.

UTS management is pursuing a \$100 million cost-cutting program that includes hundreds of job cuts and the closure or restructuring of courses and faculties. Staff have linked job cuts to unsafe workloads and risks of psychological harm.

After seven months of negotiations, UTS issued a 1.5 percent interim pay rise, which continues the sub-inflation pay rises negotiated by the NTEU in the previous EA. The NTEU's initial wage demand when negotiations began was for a 20 percent increase over four years.

The dispute is part of a broader crisis across the higher education sector, characterised by job cuts, workload intensification, and protracted bargaining disputes. The March 19 strike signals a deepening confrontation, with further stoppages and industrial escalation likely.

Manufacturing workers strike at Vinidex in Victoria

On March 23, workers at the Vinidex plant in Sunshine, Victoria, went on strike and rallied outside for higher wages and better conditions after negotiations for a new Enterprise Agreement (EA) broke down.

Negotiations between Vinidex and the United Workers Union (UWU), which has 47 members at the plant, began prior to the expiry of the previous EA in February this year. On March 13, the workers voted nearly unanimously in favour of strike action.

The UWU has not publicly stated any demands: its media releases say it is calling for fair wages related to the cost of living. Under the 2022 Enterprise Agreement, workers received a 4.0 percent pay rise in July 2024, but inflation has offset this increase.

Vinidex is one of Australia's biggest pipe system manufacturers. It has sites in Brisbane, Smithfield (NSW) and in Sunshine, Victoria. Vinidex is owned by the Aliaxis group, which operates in 40 countries and had revenue of €3.5 billion (AUD\$5.85 billion) last year.

Western Australia's Curtin University educators strike

On March 23, educators at Western Australia's largest university escalated their industrial action campaign with a 24-hour strike and a plan to boycott the university's open day. Workers are seeking higher wages, better conditions and more secure work in a new enterprise agreement (EA) with Curtin University management.

The strike by around 600 National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) members follows drawn out union-management negotiations begun in 2025, before the expiry of the previous EA. Earlier this month, the educators rejected a sub-inflation wage "rise" offer from management that also ignored their key demands on working conditions.

The log of claims put forward by the NTEU includes a pay rise of 20 percent over four years—barely more than current inflation and inadequate to meet the real rising cost-of-living—as well as a reduction in academic workloads, an entitlement for professional staff to work from home, more secure employment and improved access to parking on campus. Striking educators also want an end to casualisation and say many have been employed for up to 10 years with no guarantee they'll have work from one semester to the next.

New Zealand firefighters continue strikes

Two thousand professional firefighters across New Zealand are continuing to hold one-hour strikes twice a week in opposition to the government agency Fire and Emergency NZ's below-inflation pay rise of 6.2 percent spread over three years. Firefighters are also protesting faulty equipment, understaffing and a lack of support for firefighters who develop cancer.

Industrial action has been occurring for about seven months. A strike that was to occur on March 27 was called off by the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) due to extreme weather in parts of the country. Strikes have been scheduled for next week on Monday March 30 and Wednesday April 1.

The NZPFU recently accepted FENZ's proposal to attend bargaining facilitated by the state's Employment Relations Authority, but FENZ then declared it would not take part in the negotiations scheduled for next week until the union agreed to stop all industrial actions. The NZPFU refused and urged FENZ to "constructively and genuinely engage" with the union.



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