

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.

South Korea: Striking worker killed on CU Logistics Centre picket line

One worker was killed and two injured by a truck driven by scab labour which attempted to break through a picket line organised by Cargo Solidarity members outside the CU Jinju Logistics Centre in Yeha-ri on April 20. About 1,700 workers returned to the site the next day chanting slogans demanding strict punishment of the driver. A temporary memorial altar was established at the site.

Cargo Solidarity, representing cargo drivers delivering goods to CU convenience stores, initiated the strike on April 5, claiming that BGF Retail, is their “real employer.” The strike has shut down several CU logistics centres and production facilities. The workers are classified as “special-type workers” contracted with local transportation companies, not directly with CU. BGF insists that the drivers are not their employees and had deployed substitute vehicles to deliver goods during the strike.

Cargo Solidarity, affiliated to the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), is calling for direct negotiations in line with the August 2025, Trade Union and Labour Relations Adjustment Act. The Act established a legal basis for subcontracted employees to bargain directly with principal employers. Any entity that substantially controls workers’ terms and conditions of employment is recognised as an “employer.”

On April 15, Seoul Hyundai subcontract workers rallied outside the Hyundai Motor Group headquarters in Seocho-gu to demand negotiations in line with the 2025 amendment. Over 20,000 subcontract workers from 58 branches of the Korea Metal Workers Union, affiliated with the KCTU, have submitted formal bargaining demands to 18 principal employers.

South Korea: Samsung Electronics semiconductor workers rally and confirm May 21 strike

About 37,000 members of the Samsung Biologistics union held a “resolution” rally outside the company’s semiconductor campus in Pyeongtaek on Thursday and confirmed their intention to hold an 18-day strike on May 21.

On March 20, 93 percent of 66,000 union members voted for future industrial action in their dispute over bonus pay. The ballot was organised by the Joint Struggle Headquarters, composed of the Samsung Electronics Branch of the Enterprise-Level Union, the National Samsung Electronics Union and the Samsung Electronics Union Dongheng.

Three months of negotiations with management failed to reach agreement on the calculation criteria for the Excess Profit Incentive (OPI), a representative performance bonus system. Samsung Electronics has a 50 percent annual salary cap on OPI.

The union wants 15 percent of annual operating profit as performance bonuses with no cap. Management made another offer which was rejected by the union. The union initially sought 10 percent, but raised the figure after Samsung posted 57.2 trillion won (\$US38.6 billion) in first-quarter operating profits on April 7, an eightfold year-on-year surge and the largest quarterly result in Korean corporate history. Samsung Electronics has total workforce of 128,881.

The planned strike is drawing attention as a global supply chain issue, with Reuters reporting that strike action at “the world’s largest memory chip manufacturer could exacerbate global semiconductor supply bottlenecks.” The union claims that the strike will cause production disruptions worth between 20 trillion and 30 trillion Korean won.

India: Maharashtra state government employees on strike

About 1.7 million Maharashtra state government, semi-government, teaching, non-teaching and Class IV workers began an indefinite strike on Tuesday. Their major demand is to replace the New Pension Scheme with the Old Pension Scheme which is more beneficial for workers.

The government has issued a “No work-No pay policy” against striking workers. Workers have seventeen demands including starting recruitment for Class IV employees and drivers, a health insurance scheme, lifting the retirement age to 60, permanent jobs for contractual employees, resolving pay scale issues for clerical staff, and addressing ongoing problems in the Health Department.

The State Government Employees’ Central Association and the State Government Group-D (Class IV) Employees’ Central Federation called the strike.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation contract workers protest

Thousands of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) contract workers rallied outside the civic body’s office on Tuesday to demand better wages and conditions. Union representatives said that about 50,000 workers had seen little improvement in wages over the past four years.

Workers want a minimum monthly wage of 26,000 rupees (\$US277) to match soaring prices of food and essentials, proper leave entitlements, bonuses, and benefits guaranteed under labour laws.

Hyderabad water utility workers oppose forced transfers

Over 200 members of the Water Works Employees Union gathered at the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board headquarters on Tuesday to protest the sudden transfers of workers to other civic bodies without consultation. Workers have also raised concerns about neglected safety provisions, such as uniforms and protective gear, which they said were vital for field staff during the summer.

Telangana road transport workers strike with 32 demands

Over 38,000 Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) workers struck from midnight Wednesday after talks with the government failed over 32 demands. About 6,000 buses and more than 500,000 passengers are affected.

Strikers want TGSRTC merged with the state government, pay parity with government employees, wage revisions, and clearance of pending dues including provident fund and cooperative payments. They are also demanding official elections for trade unions, better job security and improved welfare measures for drivers and conductors.

The government had threatened to impose the Essential Services Maintenance Act which would make the strike illegal and see workers face heavy fines and disciplinary action.

Royal Hobart Hospital cleaners strike again over inadequate resources

About 60 Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) members from the Royal Hobart Hospital's Environmental Services Department walked out for an hour on April 14 and rallied outside the premises to protest inadequate resourcing, the introduction of contract cleaners, threatened privatisation and ongoing linen and staffing shortages.

Workers are also opposing management's decision to increase the department's middle management. They claim that the proposed middle management role simply duplicates duties already carried out by supervisors and are demanding that resources should be used for more frontline cleaning staff.

Ambulance Tasmania workers reject government pay deal and take industrial action

Paramedics and communications centre workers employed by Ambulance Tasmania have rejected the latest enterprise agreement offer from the state Liberal government and plan further industrial action.

The government's offer included annual wage rises of 3 percent, 3 percent and 2.75 percent. The annualised February inflation rate for Tasmania's capital, Hobart, is 4 percent and rising. Workers say the

government isn't addressing their demands for above-inflation wage rises and an end to chronic understaffing. Ambulance Australia is sending out ambulances with only one paramedic instead of a normal two-person crew. Communications centre officers said they are frequently denied toilet breaks due to short staffing.

The Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) says its members are fed up with being stuck on hospital ramps waiting to offload patients for hours after their shifts end, unable to get back on the road or home to their families. This has led to delayed responses, missed breaks and extended shifts, intensifying physical and psychological strain.

On April 7, ambulance workers banned overtime, and communications and administrative tasks. On Monday, ambulance crew and communications centre officers refused to stay one minute longer than their designated shift and walked off the job.

The ongoing dispute reflects broader opposition among frontline health workers to wage suppression amid rising living costs and deepening pressures across the public health system. Ambulance Tasmania workers threatened to escalate industrial action in the coming weeks to include 24-hour stoppages.

Clare House child and youth mental health workers in Hobart protest

About a dozen workers from Tasmania's Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS) at Clare House, in Hobart stopped work for two hours and protested outside the facility on April 15. The action followed a similar protest on April 1 to protect the Clare House site.

Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) members are opposed to the Tasmanian government's plan to move CYMHS at Clare House in New Town to a commercial office space in the centre of Hobart. The Australian Medical Association has also opposed the move.

Clare House provides critical, early intervention mental health support to young Tasmanians and their families. Workers said they are concerned that moving from a therapeutic, purpose-designed space into a generic office environment risks undermining the quality and safety of care.

Lauriston Girl's School teachers in Melbourne take action for pay rise

About 80 teachers at the prestigious Lauriston Girls' School in Melbourne began low-level industrial action on Monday for an improved pay rise offer in a new enterprise agreement. Action includes adding campaign statements to their work emails; displaying materials in the school about the campaign and not adhering to the dress code.

Negotiations between the Independent Education Union (IEU) and management began in May last year. Talks reached an impasse after 85 percent of the school's 200 staff rejected management's sub-inflation offer of a 9 percent pay rise spread over three years. Melbourne's current official inflation rate is 3.3 percent and predicted to climb higher. IEU members want an 18 percent increase over three years.

On March 31, IEU members voted overwhelmingly for future industrial action that could include 14 partial work bans and an indefinite period of work stoppages between 5 minutes and 24 hours. Teachers also want improved conditions including improved parental leave provisions, school superannuation contributions whilst on leave, better access to pregnancy-related entitlements, and expanded domestic violence leave, issues central to the overwhelmingly female workforce.

that management “have made it clear they intend to sell the company. They want a low wages outcome to try and get a higher price.”

Workers at eight Melbourne councils plan 24-hour strike

In a major escalation to current industrial action by Australian Services Union (ASU) members at eight Melbourne metropolitan councils, who are currently negotiating a multi-employer enterprise agreement, the union announced on April 17 that its 7,000 members will walk off the job for 24 hours on May 5.

Ongoing industrial action commenced at several councils on April 4 with garbage collectors at three councils refusing to empty roadside bins. Workers at most councils are maintaining partial work bans involving library workers, gardening and field maintenance workers and administrative staff.

Council managements have started cutting workers’ pay for taking action. Merri-bek Council docked Home Support workers’ pay by 66 percent and Home Maintenance workers’ pay by 100 percent for two days. The Hume City Council has mobilised scab contractors to empty roadside bins and cut the wages of its garbage collectors.

The ASU is demanding an initial 10 percent wage rise, followed by 4 percent annual increases, along with improved safety and parental leave. The union says its members have lost 7 to 12 percent of their wages in real terms since 2021 and is blaming the government’s 2.75 percent rate capping policy for previous sub-inflation wage growth.

Kinetic bus drivers in Tasmania strike for pay parity

Kinetic bus drivers across Tasmania stopped work for two hours at 7 a.m. on Thursday affecting hundreds of Kinetic’s regional, intercity and charter operations. The Transport Workers Union (TWU) has been negotiating with Kinetic for a new enterprise agreement since November 2025.

Some 95 percent of members rejected Kinetic’s proposed agreement in March saying it was totally inadequate and failed to bridge the \$250 weekly wage gap (\$6.39 an hour) with the state-owned Metro Tasmania drivers, who service Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. They said the offer did not provide “real improvements” to base pay and conditions. The TWU has threatened to escalate industrial action after the school holidays if an agreement is not reached.

Brownes Foods logistics workers in Western Australia strike again

About 60 Transport Workers Union (TWU) members at Brownes Foods dairy processing facilities at Balcatta and Brunswick in Western Australia (WA) began two days of rolling stoppages on Thursday to protest the company’s low pay offer. The workers struck for 24 hours on April 1 after rejecting the company’s offer which contained a sub-inflation pay rise of only 3 percent, unfair parental leave conditions and poor job security.

The TWU wants a cost-of-living wage rise. Inflation in Perth, the WA capital, is currently 4.9 percent per annum and predicted to increase. The cost of housing in the city rose by 14.5 percent over the past year.

The TWU said Brownes’ management became hostile during negotiations after the April 1 strike. A union spokesman told the media

National Broadband Network subcontract workers in New South Wales strike over low pay

On Wednesday, National Broadband Network (NBN) subcontractors, represented by the Communication Workers Union (CWU), stopped work for 24 hours and rallied outside the company’s headquarters at North Sydney to protest new contracts announced by Ventia, NBN’s service delivery contractor, and recent changes to installation requirements.

Workers complained that Ventia has cut payments for certain tasks compared to 2024–2025. A CWU representative said that the reduction in rates and the rising fuel costs have left subcontractors struggling to make ends meet.

An NBN spokesperson claimed the issue was not their responsibility, telling media, “We engage two primary delivery partners to fulfil certain construction, upgrade and maintenance programs. These delivery partners directly engage contractors and subcontractors and are responsible for setting pay arrangements and managing their day-to-day workforce matters.”

Rallying workers chanted, “Shame NBN shame,” “Who builds the network? We do,” “We want fair work.” One worker said that pay rates had changed for only a few roles in the past 18 months.

Another worker said that subcontractors only get one or two hours of work a day despite committing to an eight-hour workday with the network. “If there is no work, they ask us [to just] wait for work, so we have to wait in [our] vans ... We are not taxi drivers, we are technicians,” he said. The CWU has not indicated whether it plans to call any future industrial action.



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