# Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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

**India: Punjab sanitation workers continue statewide action**

Sanitation workers remain on strike after walking out state-wide on July 8 to demand permanent jobs, abolition of outsourcing, a minimum monthly wage of 40,000 rupees ($416), reintroduction of the previous non-contributory pension scheme, and other outstanding issues. Strikers have defied a high court directive to return to work and government threats that it would impose the Essential Service Maintenance Act.

Sanitation workers have won strong support in Tarn Taran, Fatehgarh Sahib, Sirhind, Kharar and Faridkot. On Wednesday, strikers demonstrated in front of the Sub Divisional Manager's office in Barnala chanting slogans and burning an effigy of the government to protest violent police attacks on strikers. Sanitation workers said they were terrorised by police operating bulldozers to remove piled-up garbage.

The strike is controlled by the Municipal Mulazam Action Committee and the Safai Sewak Union, which have threatened to escalate the dispute if the police attacks continue.

**Tamil Nadu power distribution workers begin indefinite action for permanent jobs**

Contract workers at the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TNPDCL) began an indefinite strike on July 21 in Dharmapuri. They are demanding justice for thousands of contract employees who are denied basic rights and job security.

The contract workers, many of whom have been employed for over two decades, want permanent jobs. Protesters pointed out that while there are over 70,000 vacancies in the Energy Department, contract workers are blocked from securing permanent appointments. Strikers want these vacancies filled, job security and compassionate employment for members of the families of over 250 contract workers who have died whilst in service.

**Gig workers hold statewide strike in Telangana state**

Gig workers in Telangana, including app-based cab, auto, goods transport, and delivery drivers, held a one-day statewide strike during peak demand hours on July 22. The platforms impacted include Ola, Uber, Rapido, Swiggy, Zomato, Zepto, Blinkit and Porter. Workers want fair pay, including a minimum base fare, revised per-kilometre and per-minute rates, and stricter regulation of aggregator platforms. The workers said they would resort to an indefinite strike from August 8, if their demands were not met.

**Bangladesh: Thakurgaon Sugar Mill workers protest for permanent jobs and wage reform**

Workers at the state-owned Thakurgaon Sugar Mill in northern Bangladesh held a protest and work stoppage on Tuesday as part of a nationwide campaign called by the Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation Workers and Employees Federation.

Organised by the Thakurgaon Sugar Mill Workers' Union, workers and employees gathered on the mill premises in the morning before marching through the factory grounds and rallying outside the managing director's office.

Union officials condemned management and government authorities for refusing to regularise the employment of seasonal workers, despite years of service, and for failing to implement a revised wage structure aligned with the latest national pay scale.

Workers demanded the restoration of internal recruitment procedures that previously allowed qualified seasonal employees to obtain permanent positions, arguing that permanent employment was essential to improving productivity, retaining experienced workers and developing a skilled workforce. The protesters also called for a 15 percent special allowance comparable to benefits granted to government employees.

Protesters warned that the July 21 protest was only the beginning of a broader campaign. They announced plans for a four-hour work stoppage on July 22 and a full-day strike on July 23 if their demands are not met, indicating that further industrial action would follow. They previously demonstrated over these demands on April 5.

**Cambodia: Casino Workers protest in Phnom Penh**

Around 50 members of the Labour Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of NagaWorld (the largest integrated casino and resort complex in the Mekong Region) protested outside the Phnom Penh casino complex on July 17, continuing a dispute that has lasted more than four years.

The workers are demanding the reinstatement of dismissed employees, payment of back wages, the withdrawal of criminal charges against union members and renewed negotiations with NagaWorld management.

The dispute began in 2021, when the company laid off 1,329 workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the union's entire leadership and hundreds of members and activists. Workers maintain that the restructuring was aimed at destroying the independent union.

The struggle has faced sustained police and judicial repression. Union president Chhim Sithar was imprisoned for two years, while other union leaders and activists received prison or suspended sentences. Most recently, union members were summoned and questioned over allegations of aggravated intentional damage, despite workers insisting their demonstrations were peaceful.

NagaWorld's parent company, NagaCorp, holds a monopoly over casino operations in Phnom Penh until 2045, while its gaming licence extends to 2065.

**Service Stream defence facility workers reject wage-cutting enterprise agreement**

Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union (CEPU) members employed by Service Stream at Royal Australian Air Force Base Edinburgh, north of Adelaide, and the Defence Base at Woomera in outback South Australia, voted down a wage- and condition-slashing proposed enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) on July 21. The company had put the agreement to a direct vote without union endorsement.

The rejection followed a series of rolling stoppages. Workers, including electricians, plumbers and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) technicians, who maintain critical infrastructure at the two defence facilities, walked off the job on July 16 and 17, again across July 20–21 and then for a fifth day on July 23. The workers are demanding an EBA that delivers industry-standard wages and conditions.

Service Stream, which designs, operates and maintains critical infrastructure across Australia, last year signed a $1.6 billion contract with the federal government to manage defence assets. Workers have pointed to this lucrative contract as proof that the company has ample capacity to meet their demands.

The rejection of the company's offer and the continuing stoppages reflect the growing determination of Australian workers to fight for their fair share of the wealth they produce.

**Parks Victoria workers implement statewide work bans against Labor government wage cuts**

Parks Victoria (PV) staff represented by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) will implement work bans across dozens of national and state parks from Saturday, July 25 through Monday, July 27, as their long-running dispute over pay and conditions intensifies. Entrance gates will remain locked, bins will not be emptied, and toilets will not be cleaned at reserves across Victoria.

The action follows more than a year of failed negotiations in which PV management—adhering to the state Labor government's public sector wage cap policy—has refused to present an acceptable offer. Multiple PV pay grades currently fall below the new national minimum wage and remain well beneath the rates paid to other Victorian public sector workers.

The work bans come on the heels of industrial action by Australian Workers Union (AWU) members at Parks Victoria in May and June, who also rejected sub-inflationary annual pay increases of 3 percent (against an official inflation rate of 4.6 percent). At that time, the AWU signalled it was prepared to accept the government's wages policy if combined with a ranger reclassification commitment—a clear indication that the union bureaucracy is seeking to shut down the struggle on terms acceptable to the Labor government.

**Victorian public sector allied health workers stop work**

More than 1,000 allied health workers employed at Victoria's public hospitals and covered by the Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association (VAHPA) stopped work for three hours on Thursday as part of a long-running dispute over wages and conditions. Workers rallied outside Frankston's Peninsula University Hospital and Monash Medical Centre Clayton.

Thursday's stoppage followed a lunchtime rally the previous day outside Warrnambool Base Hospital, part of a string of own-time protests at individual hospitals around the state.

On June 16, allied health professional members took 24-hour strike action, with about 3,000 union members marching to the Victorian parliament during stalled enterprise bargaining negotiations with the Allan Labor government. In early July, workers imposed indefinite work bans on the authorisation and release of test results and duties associated with discharging patients.

The dispute involves more than 13,000 workers represented by the Medical Scientists Association of Victoria (MSAV), VAHPA, the Victorian Psychologists Association and the Association of Hospital Pharmacists.

VAHPA wants a 36.18 percent wage increase over three years, improved career structures and measures to address chronic staffing shortages and excessive workloads. MSAV has been negotiating with the government for 14 months and is seeking a 28 percent wage increase over four years. The government has offered workers a meagre 19–21 percent nominal pay rise over four years, far short of the soaring cost of living.

While workers have demonstrated their determination to fight, the unions have tightly restricted industrial action, combined with appeals for more talks with the Victorian Labor government, which faces a state election in November.

**Disability support workers strike in regional Victoria**

Disability support workers employed by Possability walked off the job in Bendigo, regional Victoria, on July 16, demanding better pay and conditions. Workers marched from Bendigo Trades Hall to Premier Jacinta Allan's electorate office to call on the state Labor government to restore funding for supported living homes for the disabled, which ran out on December 31.

The Health and Community Services Union (HACSU), which covers the workers, says if the funding is not restored, 580 group homes could close, some 2,500 people with disabilities could be dislocated, and 7,500 disability support workers across the state could lose more than a third of their wages.

The July 16 protest was part of a series of demonstrations called by the union, limited in each case to workers at a single provider or in a specific region. HACSU's "Save Disability" campaign is entirely focussed on issuing plaintive demands to the state Labor government, cutting Victorian disability workers off from their counterparts interstate.

This is a striking act of political isolation, under conditions where the federal Labor government has announced the slashing of $38 billion from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), the largest attack on social spending in Australia's history. The cuts will strip all supports from hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities off the NDIS and deny hundreds of thousands more all but the most basic care necessary to sustain life.

Labor's attack on the NDIS will cut a swathe through the disability care workforce, and most unions covering the sector have either openly supported the measures, or quietly accepted them.