

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: Anganwadi workers in Himachal Pradesh protest delayed honorarium hike

Anganwadi workers and helpers across Himachal Pradesh staged statewide protests on October 23 against the state government's decision to delay a planned monthly honorarium increase. Organised by the Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU)-affiliated Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, the agitation followed an October 22 notification issued by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.

The notification implemented a 1,000 rupee (\$US10.5) per month hike starting November 1, 2026, instead of April 2026 as originally announced during the Budget Session. Union leaders, including CITU District President Lakhanpal Sharma, accused the government of reneging on its budget promises. The delay denies the workers seven months of retroactive arrears.

Under the revised rates, the monthly honorarium increases from 10,500 rupees to 11,500 for Anganwadi workers, and from 5,800 rupees to 6,800 rupees for helpers. The protesters are demanding the immediate payment of the seven months' arrears.

Uttar Pradesh: Lawyers protest the demolition of chambers by Lucknow Municipal Corporation

The Lucknow Municipal Corporation deployed bulldozers to demolish over 100 lawyers' chambers near the Kaiserbagh court complex, sparking immediate resistance from legal practitioners on October 25.

The state-backed anti-encroachment drive targets a total of 211 structures deemed unauthorised, threatening the livelihoods of an estimated 2,000 advocates right before the Diwali festival.

As police and administrative squads arrived, hundreds of lawyers launched a spontaneous sit-in protest on the streets, blocking machinery to stall the destruction. Affected workers condemned the state's actions as highly arbitrary and vindictive.

India: Police charge Uttar Pradesh ASHA workers and union leaders after Lucknow protest

Thousands of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers and ASHA facilitators from across Uttar Pradesh rallied at Eco Garden in Lucknow on October 23. The protest was called by the Uttar Pradesh ASHA Workers Union, affiliated with the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU). In the afternoon, protesters marched towards the state assembly and sat down on VIP Road.

Police charged a union leader and 250 workers for blocking the road.

The workers are demanding recognition as government employees, a monthly honorarium of 21,000 rupees for ASHA workers and 26,000 rupees for facilitators, payment of overdue incentives, and social security. They are also demanding that the state government implement a February 7 agreement. It included raising the state's share of their base pay from 1,500 to 7,500 rupees, maternity leave and life insurance of 1 million rupees.

Contractual electricity workers protest mass retrenchment

Contractual labour forces operating under the Khordha electricity division launched a massive street mobilisation on Monday, October 26, to protest sudden, widespread job terminations across 18 administrative sections.

Hundreds of casual and contract labourers were terminated from their duties during the month of October, completely violating a state executive guarantee issued four months ago by the Chief Minister, assuring total employment security for contractual units.

Punjab: Public toilet cleaning workers strike for better wages in Mohali

Public toilet cleaning workers in Mohali, covered by the Safai Sewak Union Punjab, have been on strike since October 7, demanding better wages, employment permanency, and improved working conditions.

The striking workers submitted an official representation to local authorities highlighting demands including permanent status for all employees who have been in service since 2014, a wage hike of 20,500 rupees (\$215) per month, strict payment of salaries by the 7th of every month, the immediate release of unpaid salaries from September, rehiring of workers who were laid off in 2024 after completing 10 years of service, allocation of at least four workers to manage each public toilet, an end to assigning female employees to clean men's toilets and provision of a standard weekly day off on Sundays.

The union has stated that they will escalate and intensify the protest if their demands are not met.

Bangladesh: Garment workers block Dhaka-Tangail highway demanding wage increases

Garment workers from at least 10 factories staged protests on Tuesday, blocking the Dhaka–Tangail highway in the Mouchak area of Kaliakair, Gazipur, demanding higher wages and benefits.

The protests began around 10:30 a.m., when workers at Essential Clothing Limited launched demonstrations outside their factory. They subsequently marched along the Mouchak–Phulbaria road towards the highway, where they blocked traffic, causing lengthy traffic jams. They urged other workers to join the protest.

According to Gazipur Industrial Police, workers from 10 to 12 factories joined the movement, forcing several factories to suspend operations. Management at several factories declared a holiday in an attempt to prevent further spread of the protests.

ACT public sector workers strike against Labor government's pay offer

Hundreds of Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government workers struck for two hours on Thursday, October 29, and marched on the Legislative Assembly in Canberra.

The strikers included administrative staff, outdoor general service officers, engineers and other professionals, as well as doctors, and are covered by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU), Professionals Australia and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (ASMOF).

The ACT Labor government of Chief Minister Andrew Barr has offered increases of 1.5 percent every six months over three years, equal to 3 percent a year. Workers would get one-off payments of \$600 in 2027 and 2028 if inflation exceeded 3.5 percent, or \$1,000 if it exceeded 4 percent.

With official inflation already at 4.3 percent, Labor's offer is a real wage cut.

The CFMEU is seeking 5 percent in 2026, 4 percent in 2027 and 3 percent in 2028, plus a \$5,800 annual allowance for essential in-person work. The unions are also seeking improvements in superannuation and flexible work.

Public school teachers in the Australian Education Union held rolling stoppages last week and have threatened a 24-hour strike this term. On October 23, delegates of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) passed a resolution condemning the territory government's failure to bargain and declaring members ready to take protected action.

Qantas ground workers hold second 24-hour national strike

Hundreds of Qantas ground workers struck for 24 hours on October 28 at Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth airports. The workers, including Qantas Freight handlers, are members of the Transport Workers' Union (TWU). They are employed through the Qantas subsidiaries Qantas Airways Limited, Qantas Ground Services and Australian Air Express.

Workers in Sydney and Melbourne walked out in the morning, and those in Perth and Brisbane from 7 p.m. It was their second 24-hour strike, after the first on September 24.

They are demanding pay in line with industry standards after a decade of wage suppression, more full-time jobs and hours, and the return of all workers to a single Qantas employer. Under former chief executive Alan Joyce, the airline split its ground staff across subsidiaries and outsourced about 1,700 workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, a sacking the High Court ruled illegal in 2023. The TWU says the remaining workers are now paid less than the contractors Qantas brought in to replace them.

Sydney Airport security screeners walk off during peak periods

Security screeners employed by multinational contractor Certis at Sydney Airport walked off the job twice on Friday, October 30, during the morning and afternoon peak travel periods. The workers are members of the United Workers Union (UWU). TWU members at Certis struck on October 16.

The screeners are demanding fair pay, predictable rosters, job security and protection against job cuts through artificial intelligence and automation. They also want an industry standard so that all airport security workers doing the same job get the same pay and conditions. The UWU said Certis had refused to improve its wage offer after months of negotiations.

Tasmanian nurses stop work over hospital crisis and staffing cuts

ANMF nurses and midwives at Launceston General Hospital held a 15-minute stop-work rally on October 27. They were protesting chronic staff shortages, overcrowding and patients being treated in corridors and waiting rooms.

On October 29, ANMF members in the Royal Hobart Hospital's emergency department and emergency medical unit stopped work in the early afternoon against proposed cuts to frontline nursing staff, which would mean fewer nurses on key shifts.

The Tasmanian Liberal government has not tabled a wage offer to public sector nurses after months of negotiations.

Also in Tasmania, Health and Community Services Union members at Corumbene aged care home in New Norfolk escalated their action with a one-hour walk-off on October 28. Carers, cleaners and general staff are demanding 14 weeks of paid parental leave, the same as nurses, instead of 6 weeks paid only after they return to work. They also want 20 days of personal leave a year, up from 13.

Private hospital nurses in NSW extend action against Healthe Care

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) members at Healthe Care facilities in the Manning Great Lakes region on the NSW mid-north coast took industrial action on October 29. The union did not specify the form of action. It follows two-hour stoppages at Wollongong Day Surgery and Shellharbour Private Hospital on October 22. The union says hundreds of members will take part in escalating action over the coming weeks.

Healthe Care is owned by private equity firm Pacific Equity Partners and runs 13 private hospitals and day surgeries in NSW. The company is offering a nominal pay rise of 8.4 percent over three years, well below inflation. Nurses are demanding enforceable staff-to-patient ratios.

Queensland child safety and youth justice workers stop work

Child safety and youth justice workers, covered by the Together union, held a stop-work on October 29. They are demanding an offer from the Liberal-National state government that deals with workloads, pay parity, resources and workplace safety.

Many officers carry caseloads of more than 30 children, against an agreed safe level of about 16, and more than 100 child safety officer positions are vacant. They walked off for about two and a half hours from about 20 locations on September 25; the ABC has put the number of workers involved in the dispute in the thousands.

Transport workers strike at SCT Logistics and Border Express

TWU members at SCT Logistics in Western Australia struck for 24 hours on October 29. The union says local managers have bullied workers and broken full-utilisation rules by penalising union members for taking protected action.

The workers are seeking higher wages, along with better superannuation and job security. They previously held a two-hour strike on October 8.

Border Express workers in Queensland and other states struck on October 30, with a picket from 7 a.m. at the company's Underwood depot in Brisbane, and have announced a further strike on Monday, November 2.

Both disputes are part of the TWU's national road transport campaign, which is seeking pay parity at companies where the union says wages are 10 to 30 percent below industry standards.

Cleanaway workers in Melbourne hold 4-hour strike

TWU members at Cleanaway's commercial and industrial waste depot in Dandenong, Melbourne struck for four hours from 4 a.m. on October 23. This follows a one-hour stoppage on September 24, their first strike action in more than 20 years.

Workers say the company's wage offer does not keep up with inflation. They have also raised safety: Eight Cleanaway workers have been killed on the job since 2022.

Overnewton College staff hold rolling stoppages

Independent Education Union members at Overnewton Anglican Community College in Melbourne's northwest held four 15-minute stoppages at the Canowindra campus and two 30-minute stoppages at the Yirramboi campus on October 23. Staff also hung a protest banner from a bridge over the Calder Highway.

Teachers and support staff received nominal pay rises of 2.5 percent in each of 2024 and 2025, and nothing this year. By October 23 they had gone 630 days without a pay increase. The union's pay rise claim is 27 percent over three years.

New Zealand retail workers strike for better pay

Strike action by workers employed by the New Zealand retail chain Farmers took place nationwide on October 24. Workers picketed for two hours outside stores in Tauranga, Auckland, Hamilton, Hastings, Lower Hutt, Wellington, Richmond, Blenheim, Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill. About 200 workers took part.

The Workers First union has been in collective bargaining with the company since July. A union spokesperson said more than 94 percent of its 1200 members voted to reject the company's proposed pay increase, averaging about 2.5 percent for most staff. "That's less than the rising cost of living. We're yet to receive a fair and reasonable pay offer, or progress any improvements to Farmers' cruel performance pay system," she added.

Farmers is one of the only major retail brands with a performance-pay system linked to remuneration. Workers often report the company's performance-ratings are "unfair, subjective and upsetting". There are also concerns about the company's attempts to limit backpay.

Workers First said it had not received a response from the company to the strike action, nor any indication whether it was willing to return to the bargaining table. Further strike actions are "possible."

Television New Zealand staff strike over pay

Television New Zealand (TVNZ) staff walked off the job for an hour on October 29 in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. It was the first time in 20 years that workers at TVNZ had taken strike action.

Around 150 TVNZ staff, members of the E t? union and the Public Service Association were involved. The E t? union said the state broadcaster had offered workers a 2.5 percent pay rise, well below the rate of inflation and a cut in real terms. Years of offers from the state broadcaster have failed to keep up with rising prices.

TVNZ journalist Ethan Te Ora said staff can't meet basic costs. Annual inflation was 3.7 percent in the September quarter, down slightly from 4.1 percent in the previous quarter, and is expected to rise again.

Watties factory staff strike

Staff at a Watties factory in New Zealand's Hawkes Bay region walked out on October 28 in a protest about pay. Watties is a major supplier of frozen vegetables to the country's supermarkets. Nearly 100 workers joined the stoppage, with about 70 picketing the Tomoana factory for three hours.

A Mates Union spokesman said the workers were paid 3 percent less than their colleagues at another Watties plant nearby. In 2023, the company and the union had signed a terms of settlement agreeing that by 2026 they would line up the pay at both sites, but this has not happened. The union spokesman said it hopes to "get back to the table and sort

things out.”

Private hospital workers strike

Striking workers at Braemar private hospital in Hamilton maintained a picket line on the morning of October 27. Technical staff and nurses say some technicians are paid far less than their public-sector colleagues. An experienced sterile science technician would earn \$180 a week less than they would at Te Whatu Ora—Health New Zealand from December.

Theatre nurse Kaitlyn Cattley said Braemar’s latest pay offer would leave workers 2 percent worse off as prices were rising faster than wages, despite Te Whatu Ora paying for Braemar to pick up publicly funded surgeries. A recent report says 80 percent of new money the government has injected into public health in the past three years has gone to the private sector.

A week earlier more than 100 staff at Tauranga’s public Grace Hospital held a four-hour strike for better pay, following which the hospital and the New Zealand Nurses Organisation returned to bargaining.



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