

Australian public high school teachers support campaign to free Julian Assange

By our reporters
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Public school teachers and education support staff at Footscray City College in Melbourne voted for a resolution supporting the campaign to stop the persecution of WikiLeaks' editor Julian Assange, including a demonstration in Sydney on June 17, organised by the Socialist Equality Party.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is co-ordinating an international campaign in defence of Assange's freedom, which is winning the support of workers, students, civil rights lawyers, artists and academics internationally. The founder of the whistleblowing WikiLeaks website is in a highly precarious position. More than ten weeks ago, the Ecuadorian government cut him off from the outside world, closing down internet and other communications and denying visitors access to the London embassy where he has been confined since 2012.

Socialist Equality Party and Committee for Public Education member Will Marshall moved the resolution in defence of Assange at a meeting last Thursday of the Footscray City College Australian Education Union sub-branch. The meeting was attended by about 40 teachers and education support staff.

Staff unanimously voted, with no dissenting voices or votes, to adopt the following resolution:

That this sub-branch meeting of Australian Education Union—teachers and education support staff at Footscray City Secondary College—endorse the campaign to free Julian Assange and support vigils being held around the world on June 19 and a public demonstration in Sydney on June 17, organised by the Socialist Equality Party.

Assange is being targeted because he exposed the United States government for its war crimes in

Iraq and Afghanistan and its diplomatic intrigues around the world. We demand that the Turnbull government extend to Assange the rights that should be available to him as a citizen, and secure his return to Australia with guarantees against indictment and extradition to the US.

Marshall, in moving the resolution, emphasised that Assange was being targeted because he had brought to the world's attention details of the crimes of the United States and its allies, including Australia, involving their illegal wars, assassinations, and spying on their own citizens. Assange, he said, was being utilised as an example to intimidate other whistleblowers and outspoken opponents of government policy. He also explained that successive Labor and Liberal federal governments had supported the persecution of Assange and refused to extend to him his basic democratic rights as an Australian citizen.

The vote to support the campaign to free Assange is another example of the immense hostility of ordinary working people to the destruction of democratic rights. The *World Socialist Web Site* has published remarks in support of the WikiLeaks' editor from workers around the world, as well as numerous statements endorsing the Sydney demonstration from artists, journalists, lawyers, filmmakers and others (see articles on the campaign against Internet censorship). The defence of Assange is vital, both for his own personal welfare as he confronts the threat of extradition to the US and a lifetime of imprisonment and torture there, and for the defence of the fundamental democratic rights of the entire working class to freedom of speech and online communication.

After the Footscray City College meeting, Marshall

spoke with several teachers. Natasha, an Italian teacher, [*she is in the red jumper in the photo*] said: “Because Assange leaked information about the wars launched by Obama and Clinton he is now wanted by the CIA and FBI. He exposed government decisions that involved massacres and the weapons they used.”

Referring to the political crisis in Italy, she said: “The Lega [League, a right-wing extremist party] has more power than any other party with only a very small vote. [Lega leader] Matteo Salvini is anti-Muslim, racist, and disgusting. The problem is there is no ‘left.’ When the economy started going badly in the 1930s, they blamed the Jews. Now it is migrants who happen to be black.”

Frank, a chemistry teacher, said [*he is on the far right in the photo*]: “This is like 1984. Civil liberties are going out the window. If they aren’t holding Assange there [in the Ecuadorian embassy] then why are the police outside? He has upset the right people. They are using him as an example. WikiLeaks exposed how US foreign policy was holding everyone to ransom. The Australian government is complicit—they haven’t said a word about Assange. Even drug pushers get some kind of support from the Australian embassy ... The big countries are getting away with crimes. What is infuriating is that the media is complicit in all of this. They allow anything to be said.”

The Socialist Equality Party and the Committee for Public Education encourage all teachers and education support staff to actively support and participate in the upcoming demonstrations and vigils supporting Assange, and to pass resolutions similar to the one at Footscray City College, prior to the June 17–19 events.

Resolutions can be sent here

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>