

Motion moved in defence of Julian Assange at Illawarra Teachers Association Meeting in Wollongong, Australia

The movement of rank and file teachers in Australia organising defence of Julian Assange continued to grow when teacher Pietro Mascetti moved a motion at the Illawarra Teachers Association Meeting on February 24th. The meeting was held in Wollongong, in the region of Illawarra, which is a coastal region to the south of Sydney. The Association is part of the NSW Teachers Federation (NSWTF) which covers both Primary and Secondary Teachers. The motion was passed unanimously by the approximately thirty teachers present.

The motion was [identical to the motion](#) recently moved by Erika Laslett of the SEP and passed by the Hills Association of the NSWTF. Teachers at Footscray Secondary College in Melbourne [have also passed motions](#).

The Illawarra Teachers Association motion read:

“That this meeting of teachers opposes the ongoing persecution of journalist publisher and founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange and courageous whistleblower, Chelsea Manning. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, warns specifically that “Assange’s continued exposure to arbitrariness and abuse may soon end up costing his life.”

We insist that the federal Morrison government uses its diplomatic powers to organise the safe return of Assange to Australia. We resolve to send this resolution to other schools and workplaces.”

Before the motion was moved, Pietro made the following introductory comments to the union members in attendance:

I am moved to raise critical discussion and the resolution above because a great travesty of justice is being committed which has extremely serious consequences for teachers, for our children and for the world. We are in the business of educating; of informing our students and developing critical thinking attitudes, all of which are being attacked in the persecution of Julian Assange, whose trial for extradition to the United States has begun today in London.

These are but some of the many reasons why Julian Assange needs our active support and why he is being cruelly and inhumanely persecuted:

- 1. Julian Assange created WikiLeaks that published war crimes atrocities, sent to him by currently imprisoned former US soldier, Chelsea Manning, committed by US soldiers in Iraq, particularly the video entitled Collateral Murder that reveals wanton murder by US forces on Iraqi civilians, including children and journalists. The murderers are free. Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning are not.*

- 2. JA and WikiLeaks revealed the extent of the subversion of due process in the Guantanamo Bay Camp Delta Standard Procedure files in which the US government knew that many*

prisoners there were innocent and yet still held them incommunicado (unknown to anyone else) including the Red Cross.

3. Julian Assange and WikiLeaks revealed, through the DNC Podesta emails, the extent of the corruption in the Democratic Party primaries of the 2016 Presidential election cycle in which the criminal and corrupt process of rigging an election was exposed through the murdered Seth Rich and Julian Assange. Seth is dead and Julian Assange is in prison. Hilary Clinton is both free and rich.

Julian Assange was awarded Australian journalism's highest honour, the Walkley Prize for his publications. He has committed no crime but has exposed crimes of the rich and powerful.

If he were to be extradited to the United States, he would not receive a fair trial simply because some have called for his murder, including Hilary Clinton. Also, since his persecution, many other journalists have been murdered, arrested, charged and their sources, including the amazingly principled Chelsea Manning, persecuted or killed. Annieka Smethurst, Dan Oakes, Sam Clark, Glenn Greenwald, Max Blumenthal, Daphne Caruana Galizia, have all been arrested, investigated and persecuted for revealing crimes of governments. The task of journalism, which is a source for us as educators, is to tell the truth. The truth is powerful but it is being criminalised. Honest journalism is being destroyed and the precedent set in this period is the persecution of Julian Assange.

After the passing of the motion the Association Treasurer suggested that the motion be forwarded to Federation News and

other channels in the NSWTF.

This important initiative must be built on, not just by other educators but by workers in other sectors of the working class. Julian Assange himself encouraged workers to form blocs in their unions. (The letter can be seen in the top image in article).

[Read the full call out for “Workers for Assange” on Independent Australia here.](#)

Join the [Facebook Page “Workers of Assange”](#) and help build the international working class movement that will Free Julian Assange!

Pass a motion within your unionised or non-unionised workplace!



Just as teachers have done in Australia, move a motion in your workplace or union branch to defend Assange.

These motions are stepping stones to action - such as the calling of stop-work meetings, mobilising workers for protests and ultimately political general strikes across borders.

WORKERS FOR ASSANGE



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Picture of Teachers at Hills Association of the NSWTF passing a motion in defence of Assange

Workers for Assange: Uniting to fight for Assange's freedom

The following call out for workers around the world to unite and join a "Workers for Assange" written by Davey Heller was published by Independent Australia on February 21st 2020. Independent Australia have published several articles of Davey's on Julian Assange and are strong supporters of Assange and the struggle for democratic rights.

[Read the full article here at Independent Australia.](#)

IN A TIME of deepening capitalist crisis, just as in the [1930s](#), the ruling class is turning to fascism and dictatorship. Fascism requires crushing working class resistance to succeed.

The fascist in the White House, [Donald Trump](#), is leading a global attack on the rights of the working class with his persecution of [Julian Assange](#). The "defend Assange" campaign is correctly characterised as being a free speech campaign, but it must also be seen as part of the class struggle and the working-class fightback against the threat of fascism.

This is why the launch of the Workers for Assange movement is necessary. Today the war on journalism is the spearhead of what is really a class war and Julian Assange is a class war prisoner. Without access to journalism which tells the truth

about the crimes of imperial power, without the fundamental right to know the truth, all the rights of the working class won in struggle over a century are existentially threatened.

At root, the fight to free Julian Assange must be seen as an industrial struggle. Therefore, only the international working class organised in the fight to free Julian Assange has the social power to win his freedom – another reason why this movement is necessary.

Julian Assange himself has called for industrial organising in his defence. In early November 2019, one of the few letters from Julian Assange that managed to break through the cruel information blockade inflicted by [Belmarsh Prison](#) emerged. The letter sent to a supporter in France encouraged workers to form “blocs” in their unions.

[Julian's letter read:](#)

'Dear Anne-Marie, you ask what you can do to fight for my freedom? Use your strongest skills, friends, resources and associations. If you are a nurse, gather nurses, create a bloc in the nurses union, etc! defend.wikileaks.org JPA.'

The import of Julian urging workers to organise industrially in his defence cannot be overstated. It reveals that Julian himself understands that only a mass movement of the working class can unleash the power needed to free him.

Marxists define the working class as everyone who has to

survive by earning a wage – for instance, by selling their labour. This is the vast majority of humanity who all share the same social interests of wanting access to good working conditions, democratic rights, safe and stable housing, healthcare, education and a clean environment. The working class is therefore not just “blue-collar” or factory workers, but teachers, nurses, retail workers, people in the service industry and so on.

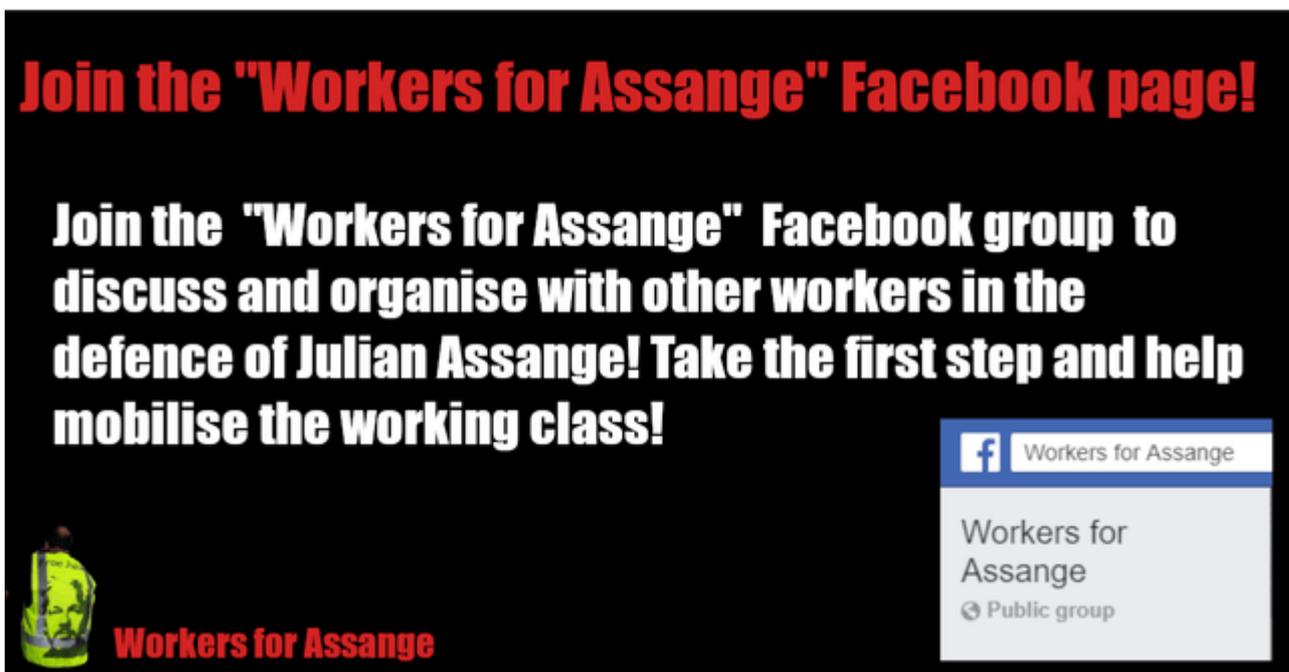
There have already been the stirrings of a working-class orientated campaign to free Julian. Out of the [Yellow Vest movement](#), who have been bravely marching against social equality – literally under police fire in France for over a year – has grown a contingent of Yellow Vests [organising on Facebook](#) who has now travelled to London three times to protest for Assange. Most significantly on 25 January, over a hundred Yellow Vests brought their militant spirit of resistance to Belmarsh.

Workers have also organised in professional “blocs”. This includes the very effective [Doctors for Assange](#). Over a hundred doctors globally have signed an open letter demanding that Julian be immediately moved out of prison to a hospital setting where he can recover his health. Journalists have also collaborated in the [Speak Up For Assange](#) open letter, now signed by over 1,000 journalists. Ranks and file teachers in [Melbourne](#) and [Sydney](#) have passed motions in support of Assange. Motions have been passed by unionists in the [San Francisco Labor Council](#) and [Pacifica Media Guild](#) in the U.S. This must be built on.

LAUNCHING “WORKERS FOR ASSANGE”

To take this fight forward, workers around the world can join a new campaign entitled Workers for Assange. Whilst unions are a major focus of this campaign, the reality is that not all workers are in unions. It must also be recognised that this struggle must be waged by ordinary workers as union bureaucracies have either been silent or made no more than token gestures. No union has sought to seriously mobilise its members through protests, strikes or even a stop-work meeting.

1. Join the Workers for Assange Facebook group



Join the "Workers for Assange" Facebook page!

Join the "Workers for Assange" Facebook group to discuss and organise with other workers in the defence of Julian Assange! Take the first step and help mobilise the working class!

Workers for Assange

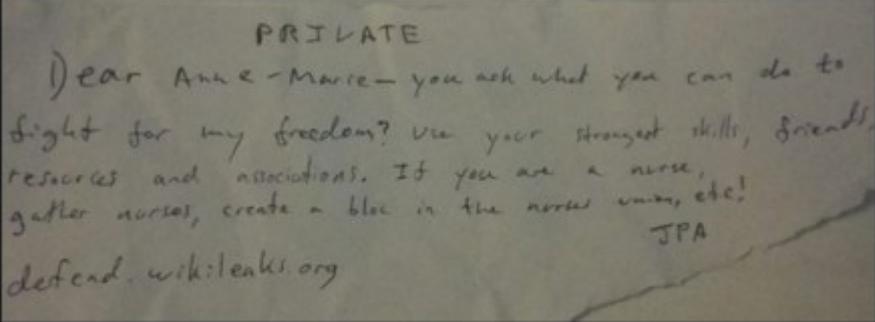
Workers for Assange
Public group

Whilst Facebook is a platform that is owned by an oligarch, is [politically censored](#) and can be a vehicle for surveillance, it is also one of the most effective organising tools available for workers globally. It has been utilised to

organise Yellow Vest protests, wildcat strikes and innumerable political struggles. That is why as part of the launch of Workers for Assange, a [Facebook group](#) has been created for workers to discuss ways the working class can be mobilised to free Assange.

2. Start a specific workers bloc.

Follow Julian's advice and start a Workers Bloc!



If you are a nurse, gather nurse, start a nurses bloc in the nurses union etc!



Workers for Assnge

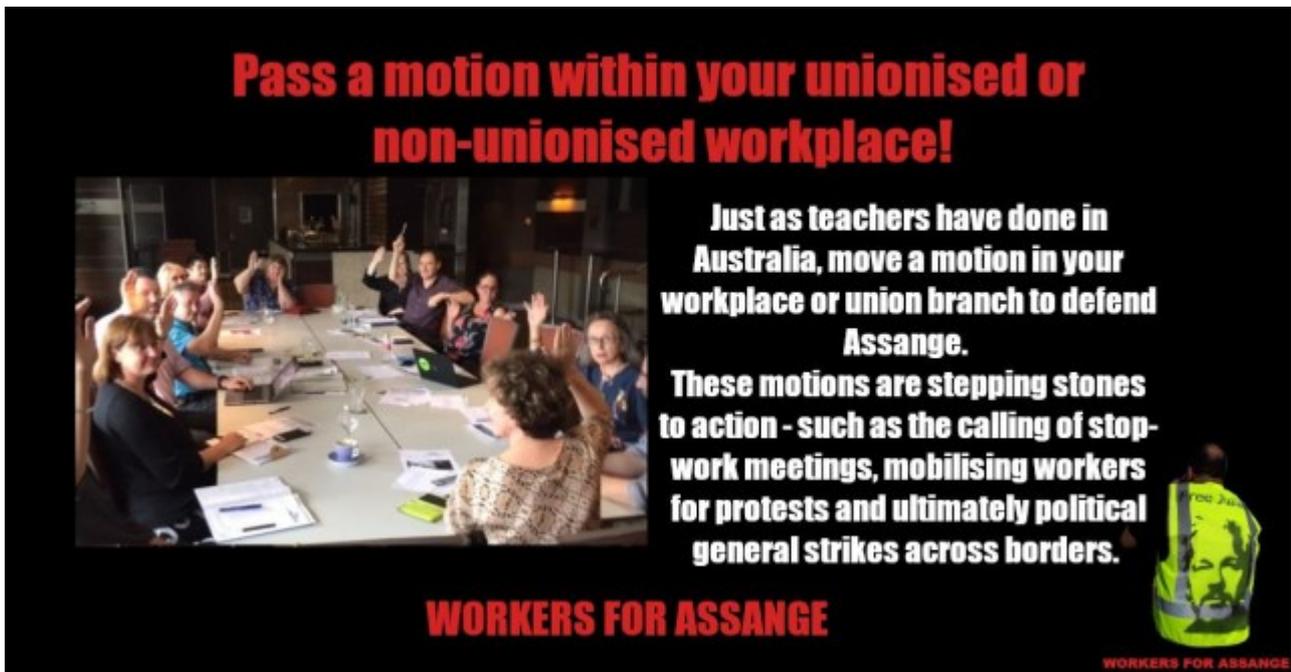
Follow Julian's advice. If you are a nurse, start a nurses bloc. If you are a teacher, start a teachers bloc. Once again, starting a Facebook group would be a good place to start this process.

3. Pass a motion within your unionised or non-unionised workplace.

Just as [teachers have done](#) in Australia, move a motion in your

workplace or union branch to defend Assange.

These motions are stepping stones to action, such as the calling of stop-work meetings, mobilising workers for protests and ultimately political general strikes across borders. Whilst aiming at strikes for Assange might sound overly ambitious, there are already political general strikes breaking out around the world. This includes the [general strike](#) in France against cuts to the pension and the general strikes and mass protests [in Chile](#) which began with small student protests against public transport fare hikes.



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The demand to free Assange would not be the only demand of such a strike but it could be a spark for such a broader movement. If the U.S. and its accomplices in the UK and Australian Government were not concerned about the potential for this campaign to spark a broad political struggle they would not be trying so hard to slander Assange and prosecute this outrageous case in the dark.

4. Adopt the Yellow Vest as the symbol of protest for Assange.

Adopt the Yellow Vest as the international symbol of protest for Assange!

By wearing the Yellow Vest you are not only being inspired by the spirit of resistance of our French comrades but we are also connecting the Assange campaign to the broader international struggle against inequality and repression.



WORKERS FOR ASSANGE

By wearing the Yellow Vest you are not only being inspired by the spirit of resistance of our French comrades but we are also connecting the Assange campaign to the broader international struggle against inequality and repression. Buy a Yellow Vest and write 'free Julian Assange' on the back and/or stencil Julian's face like [protesters in France](#) and [Melbourne](#) have done. Let's make this our international symbol of resistance.

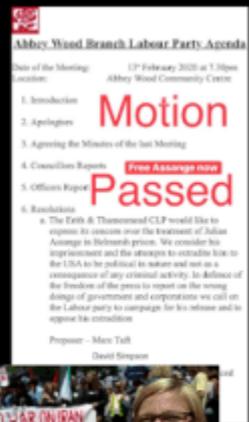
5. Use your associations.

Use your associations!

Workers are not only found in workplaces but belong to many associations. Most university students are also waged workers. Some are in political parties, anti-war groups or other community organisations. Some are artists. As Julian suggested, organise in these places too!



Workers for Assange



Workers are not only found in workplaces but belong to many associations. Most university students are also waged workers. Some are in political parties or other community organisations. As Julian suggested, organise in these places, too. [Labor Party branches in the UK](#) and [Greens branches in Australia](#) have begun to pass motions. People have moved motions in Australia at a [local council level](#). Such actions are powerful in building a movement that involves the widest possible layers of the working class.

It's time to take the campaign to free Julian Assange to the next level. The courts and politicians in the UK must be compelled to free Assange. Join the [Workers For Assange Facebook group](#) and start organising. There is no time to waste. Workers must unite for Assange.