

EUREKA NEWSLETTER No 1 -FEBRUARY 2024

THE STOCKADE



This is the first of regular monthly newsletters.

Upcoming events:

- NEWCASTLE- 9/2/24. RALLY TO END CASH PAYMENTS FOR MEDICAL SERVICES. BULK BILLING FOR ALL PATIENTS AT ALL MEDICAL CENTRES.
HANDOUTS AND PETITIONS. MEET AT CLOCKTOWER PLAZA, BEAUMONT STREET HAMILTON 10AM
- SYDNEY 11/2/24 PRESENTATION AND TALK ON "PROBLEMS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND WHAT TO DO" Presenter Spiro. EUREKA ROOMS HURLSTONE PARK SYDNEY 12PM RSVP Dorothy

Eureka was formed to rally workers and ordinary people in defence of basic needs. These are the things that people need to live a good, decent life – meaningful secure employment which provides an adequate income, transport, housing, access to health services, education, arts and sports; access to affordable energy, provision of food and water, protection from dangers such as crime and natural disasters, and the provision of a safe and healthy environment in which

to work and live. Basic human needs which have remained the same throughout the centuries.

What is the situation in Australia in 2024 in regard to our basic needs? Everywhere they are under attack. If we go through each of them, we will find big problems. Check out your latest energy bill and it's going to continue to go up.

Where have all the bulk billing doctors gone – if we're working, we pay the Medicare levy, then I pay the doctor \$90 for a 5-minute consultation and get back \$30; specialists, well they must be millionaires based on the fees they charge.

People are putting off visiting the doctor because of the costs. The housing crisis, what can you say. The cost of housing (buying, renting) has rapidly become out of reach for many workers. Food prices- what was the Coles and Woolworths profits -\$1 billion each did I hear. A well-paid permanent job - do they still exist, especially for young workers? And so on.

These basic needs are the things that ordinary workers, ordinary people are concerned about. Because they need them to grow and develop their lives.

One of our main aims in Eureka is to **mobilise as many people as possible, not just members of Eureka**, to both demand that our basic needs are met and to defend these needs when they are under attack eg to support union or worker's action for secure work in a particular industry or service; to rally people to defend workers from housing evictions and foreclosures; to rally people to oppose retrenchments at a particular factory; to rally people to

demand bulk billing for all at all health centres; to rally people for the provision of a fair and non-adversarial workers compensation system, to rally people to struggle against the rises in the costs of food and other essentials.

In campaigns it is important to have the right slogans and demands: **Bulk billing for all, at all medical centres, no extra doctor fees**; rather than urging the government to raise the Medicare rebate, which goes into the pocket of doctors, with no guarantee of that bulk billing will be available for all.

In Industrial disputes such as the railway workers campaign last year for safe trains, a proper wage increase, no privatization of services. Our slogan was: **Their fight is our fight** -all of us need safe trains, a safe working environment and a genuine wage. This is an important concept because it links, it connects, all workers and ordinary people, and highlights the common cause.

As part of campaigning around basic needs we seek to first identify and discuss the problems in a particular area of need, and work out what can be done. To do this, presentations and discussion like the upcoming one on education are important. In the past we have had presentations in both Sydney and Newcastle on the housing question and on health. Please come to these discussions, starting with the education presentation, and contribute your ideas.

We hope that the Newsletter will also assist in the process of identifying and discussing problem areas, and developing campaigns. In this regard, some of our members have identified both local issues and issues that affect all of us. Here are their contributions:

- A Sydney member in the inner west has highlighted an important local issue in terms of transport, a basic need for us all. A new private tollway was constructed. “But this is significantly delaying people in the inner-west, who are using the free roads, from entering the city. People have had to wait over an hour to get onto the road leading into the city. This has blocked all roads leading out of some people’s suburbs. It has meant school students, workers and other bus commuters have been very late. At the same time, those people who can afford and have access to the tollway have enjoyed a speedy journey.....However, those using the tollway, can spend over \$100 a week to get to work. It is more expensive for heavy vehicles. My father-in-law drives his own delivery truck and has to pay hundreds of dollars in tolls per week. We know that the poorest people in Western Sydney pay the most tolls and have terrible access to public buses. And buses are increasingly delayed since their privatization.”
- Another member raises the issue of electricity prices and their regulation. “The government has a website where you can compare energy plans so you can go with the cheapest provider. The problem is:1 Not every one knows about the website and they are staying with their

expensive provider, 2 it takes a lot of time and effort to change providers and to keep up on a regular basis with who has the most competitive price, 3 the website only makes estimates, 4 the supposed cheapest providers, such as Globird Energy, are turning customers away because they don't have capacity, Government regulation ends up being much bureaucracy for little result. It's also interesting to see from the comparisons that some companies are charging significantly more for the same product-yet the government does not intervene.”

Please join with us and others in campaigns and rallies around basic needs. Please come along to the presentations or contact us and contribute to the discussion through the newsletter. There are many causes and issues in society, but by focusing on basic needs we focus on what matters for workers and ordinary people.

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