

So what was the 1946 Pilbara Strike?

75 years ago, on May 1, 1946, hundreds of Aboriginal workers began walking off dozens of pastoral stations across the vast Pilbara region to fight for wages and better living conditions.



Committed Aboriginal leaders had for months secretly travelled to stations all over the Pilbara to alert Aboriginal workers to the strike, timed to take place just before shearing began in May.

After a hard-fought three-year struggle, the strikers finally achieved their original aim of '30 bob a week', as well as establishing their own communities independent of the previous domination of 'pastoralist, policeman and native welfare officer'.

The Strike was supported 'down south' by church and women's groups, lawyers, unions, and the Australian Communist Party: the WA Government's hand was finally forced in July 1949, when the Fremantle-based Seamen's and Lumpers' Unions voted to black ban wool from Pilbara stations still holding out against the Aboriginal strikers' demands.

The Pilbara Strike movement reshaped colonial race relations in WA and helped to inspire later and better-known acts of Aboriginal resistance like the 1966 Wave Hill walk off in the Northern Territory and the 1980 Noonkanbah blockade in the Kimberley region.

Since then, the 1946 Pilbara Strike has been recognised by the ACTU as the longest strike in Australian history, and has been regularly commemorated by WA unions at their annual May Day event on Fremantle Esplanade.

This May Day weekend we invite you to join us and members of the Pilbara Strike families in Fremantle to honour the courage and determination of the strikers, and commemorate this pivotal, yet little known event in our shared history.

*'Remembering the 1946 Pilbara Strike'
75th Anniversary Working Group*



Friday 30th April



How The West Was Lost: screening of acclaimed Pilbara Strike documentary.
7-9 pm, *DADAA Cinema*, 92 Adelaide Street, Fremantle (doors open 6 pm)
Tickets: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=748164&>

Saturday 1 May

'Stories in the Park' family event. Sit down and listen to stories of courage, strength and determination about how and why the 1946 Strike happened:

3-5 pm, *Fremantle Park, Ellen Street, Fremantle (behind Fremantle Lawn Tennis Club)*

'Remembering the Strike': an evening of songs and stories to commemorate the 1946 Pilbara Aboriginal station workers' strike. Featuring Lois Olney, David Milroy, Dave Johnson, Mike Burns & David Hyams.



Tickets: https://www.stickytickets.com.au/v85h6/pilbara_pastoral_workers_strike.aspx
7-9.30 pm (doors open 6pm). *Fremantle Park Centre*,
36 Ellen Street, Fremantle

Sunday 2 May

Unions WA May Day event.

From 10 am, *Fremantle Esplanade*

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Remembering the 1946 Pilbara Strike

