

New South Wales March 24 election:

How to vote for the Socialist Equality Party (Australia)

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
22 March 2007

The SEP's how-to-vote card for the Legislative Council is available here as a PDF file. We encourage readers to download and distribute it as widely as possible at polling booths throughout New South Wales.

The Socialist Equality Party's candidates for the upper and lower houses of the New South Wales parliament in the March 24 NSW state election have achieved ballot status. The nominations, signed by nearly 300 registered voters, were approved on March 9, along with the formal declaration of the candidates' ballot position.

In the Legislative Council (upper house), the SEP is fielding a slate of 15 candidates, listed on the ballot paper under **Group D, below the line**. To cast a valid vote for the SEP, voters need to **write the numbers 1 to 15 in the boxes beside the Group D candidates' names**. No other boxes need to be numbered.

On the Legislative Council slate are:

Nick Beams, 58, the national secretary of the SEP and a member of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*. Widely known as a leading authority on Marxist political economy, Beams has written extensively on the significance of globalised production for the international working class and has lectured in the United States, Europe, the former Soviet Union, Asia and throughout Australia. He is the author of a penetrating 10-part series on Australia's "History Wars".

Terry Cook, 64, a founding member, along with Nick Beams, of the Socialist Labour League (forerunner of the SEP) in 1972. He has been a life-long fighter for the rights of working people, leading numerous struggles in defence of jobs and conditions, most notably as secretary of the shop committee at the Elcar railway workshops in Chullora, Sydney. Since 1998 he has written extensively for the WSWs on a range of social and political issues.

Carol Divjak, 63, a retired chef and former member of the Labor Party, who joined the SEP in 1984 and stood as the party's candidate for the Senate in the 1998 federal election.

Barry Jobson, 64, a long-standing SEP member and former railway worker and union delegate who fought alongside Terry Cook against the closure of the Elcar workshops.

Peter Symonds, 56, a member of the SEP central committee and the *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board. Symonds writes regularly on political events in Asia and the Middle East.

Mike Head, 54, a lecturer in law at the University of Western Sydney. Mike has represented the SEP in previous state and federal elections and is a frequent contributor to the WSWs.

Gabriela Zabala, 43, a University of New South Wales PhD student and member of the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) steering committee.

Karen Hopperdietzel, 36, who is currently undertaking a masters of teaching at the University of Sydney and is a member of the ISSE steering committee.

Clay Robinson, 56, a retired schoolteacher and SEP member since 1975.

Beryl Hood, 68, a long-standing SEP member. Beryl is a mother and grandmother and long-time resident of Sydney's western suburbs.

Mile Klindo, 36, father of two who is completing a PhD in film history at Macquarie University.

John Plater, 58, a mental health nurse and long-standing SEP supporter.

Regina Lohr, 50, a public service worker and a leading member of the SEP's Sydney area for many years.

John Christian, 61, an ex-dock worker at Sydney's Garden Island and long-standing SEP member.

Ismet Redzovic, 39, a high school English literature tutor and long-standing supporter of the SEP.

In the Legislative Assembly (lower house), the SEP is standing three candidates. To cast a valid vote for the SEP, voters in the three electorates only need **write the number "1" in the box beside the SEP candidate's name**. No other boxes need to be numbered.

James Cogan for the seat of Heffron. James, 37, is a member of the SEP's central committee staff writer and a staff writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*. He has written extensively on the US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Patrick O'Connor for the seat of Marrickville. Aged 27, Patrick is the SEP's youngest candidate. He joined the SEP in

2003 after completing an honours degree in history at the University of WA. He has been a staff writer for the WSWs since 2006, reporting particularly on Australian politics and the Howard government's neo-colonial military interventions in East Timor and the South Pacific.

Noel Holt for the seat of Newcastle. A Telstra worker for 41 years, Noel, 58, is now retired. He joined the SEP in 1996 after many bitter experiences with the Hawke and Keating Labor governments and the trade unions. He subsequently campaigned among Telstra workers against the policies of downsizing and privatisation presided over by the union leadership.

Due to anti-democratic electoral laws, the SEP's candidates in both the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly will appear on the ballot without the SEP's name listed alongside. To secure this "privilege" in New South Wales, political parties without parliamentary representation must submit signed membership forms from 750 people in NSW, 12 months in advance of an election. The 750-member qualification is completely arbitrary. These deeply discriminatory ballot access laws were approved by all the parliamentary parties—Labor, Liberal, Democrats and Greens—in 1999 as a means of blocking any genuine challenge to the two-party system and preventing dissenting political views from being publicly aired in election campaigns.

Another anti-democratic electoral mechanism has prevented the SEP's Legislative Council slate from appearing "above the line" on the ballot paper. To choose candidates in the upper house, voters can either select their preferred party or group above the line, by simply marking "1" in the relevant square, or they can mark a minimum of 15 boxes for individual candidates listed on the lower half of the ballot paper. Most people choose to vote above the line as it provides the least complicated means of selecting one's preferred party.

The SEP, however, has been forced to list its candidates below the line because NSW electoral laws require those above the line to allocate a preference for another party or group. The official pretext is that for a vote to be valid in the upper house, a minimum of 15 candidates must be selected. Since the minimum number in a Group is 15, if one or more candidate dies before election day, a group may end up with fewer than the minimum number of candidates. This argument is entirely spurious, because there are 65 members in the upper house, and the 15-candidate requirement is completely arbitrary.

The SEP refuses to allocate preferences, because no other party standing in the elections in any way represents the interests of the working class. Whichever party wins office, it will continue with the three decades-long pro-market assault on wages, jobs, living conditions and democratic rights. To give our preferences to any one of them would be to sow dangerous illusions in the particular party and in the official parliamentary framework as a whole. The SEP would be obliged to share responsibility for whatever policies the "preferred" party or

candidate carried out after the election.

The central axis of the SEP's election campaign is the fight for the political independence of the working class from all the parties and organisations that defend the profit system. Under NSW electoral laws, because of our political principles, we are denied the right to equal ballot status.

Another anti-democratic electoral requirement has forced the SEP to register for state electoral funding. In an extraordinary breach of basic democratic rights, political parties and candidates are banned from distributing "how to vote" cards and other material outside polling booths on election day unless they register for state funding.

Whether they register for state funding or not, political parties now face a highly invasive regime of state surveillance. Electoral laws and finance reporting requirements provide wide scope for the identification of financial supporters, inspection of party records, and police search and seizure raids. These provisions—together with the requirement to issue authorities with the names and addresses of 750 members in order to officially register a party—provide ample opportunity for trumped-up prosecutions and jailings directed against any party or group that becomes a threat to the powers-that-be. It was electoral funding laws that were used to target right-wing politicians Pauline Hanson and David Ettridge in 2003. Hanson and Ettridge were convicted and sentenced to three years gaol on trumped up charges relating to alleged irregularities before being freed and exonerated on appeal.

Despite the repressive and antidemocratic barriers erected against non-parliamentary parties, the SEP has conducted an important political campaign, taking our independent, internationalist and socialist perspective to broad layers of the working class and student youth. We call on all WSWs readers who support our program and policies to contact the party, assist our work in the lead up to the March 24 vote, and give serious consideration to joining the struggle to build the SEP as the new mass socialist party of the working class.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact