

Australia: Socialist Equality Party announces its 2010 election candidates

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
19 July 2010

The Socialist Equality Party is proud to announce its candidates for the 2010 federal election, to be held on August 21. In the course of its campaign the SEP will advance the socialist alternative to the program of austerity, militarism and attacks on democratic rights being pursued by both the Gillard Labor government and the Abbott-led Liberal-National opposition, along with governments around the world, amid the deepening global economic crisis.

The SEP will contest a total of 10 House of Representative seats in New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria. It will also field above-the-line party tickets for the Senate in Victoria and New South Wales, enabling all voters in Australia's two most populous states to cast a vote for the SEP.

Nick Beams, 62, the SEP's national secretary, and member of the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web site, is heading the Senate ticket in NSW, and will be the party's national spokesman. Beams, a founding member of the party in 1972, is a well-known writer on Marxist political economy and on the historical experiences and struggles of the Australian working class. **Gabriela Zabala**, 47, an English literature postgraduate student at the University of NSW, and an SEP member since 1997, is the other member of the Senate ticket in NSW.

Across Sydney, the SEP is standing candidates in six lower house seats: Kingsford-Smith, Grayndler, Reid, Parramatta, Blaxland and Fowler.

Zac Hambides, 22, president of the University of NSW's International Students for Social Equality (ISSE), the SEP's student movement, and an SEP member since 2007, will contest the seat of **Kingsford-Smith**, a predominantly working class electorate in south Sydney. The electorate covers the Botany Bay dockyards, Sydney airport, light industry in Alexandria, as well as the University of NSW and the beachside suburbs of Maroubra and Coogee. Hambides will challenge Labor's environment minister, the

former rock-star Peter Garrett.

James Cogan, 40, the SEP's national organiser, is standing in **Grayndler**, an inner-western electorate with large concentrations of students, urban professionals and immigrants. Cogan, who has written extensively for the WSWs on the US-led occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, will challenge Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese, a long-time Labor faction boss.

Carolyn Kennett, 47, a former nurse, and now mathematics lecturer at Macquarie University, will contest **Reid**, which covers the mainly working class areas along the southern bank of the Parramatta River, including Auburn, one of the poorest areas of Sydney. As president of the university's branch of the National Tertiary Education Union for the past four years, Kennett has opposed the union's backing for the Rudd/Gillard governments' pro-market restructuring of tertiary education. She joined the SEP in 2007 and is married with five children and three grandchildren.

Chris Gordon, 42, a university mathematics teacher and an SEP member for five years, will stand in **Parramatta**, the seat he also contested in 2007. The city of Parramatta is the commercial hub of the western suburbs and home to major factories and worksites, including public sector offices, the large Westmead Hospital-Children's Hospital complex and a University of Western Sydney campus. The seat is currently held by Labor backbencher Julie Owens.

In another key western suburbs seat, **Richard Phillips**, 61, a long-standing member of the SEP's national committee, is the party's candidate in **Blaxland**. Phillips is a regular contributor to the WSWs, particularly on the arts. Centred on Bankstown, the electorate is one of the most culturally diverse in Australia, with over 40 percent of its population born overseas. Once a major industrial centre, the area now has an unemployment rate for youth aged between 15 and 19

of 45 percent—almost double the national rate of 25.8 per cent. The seat is held by Jason Clare, a Labor Party apparatchik who is being touted as a future minister.

Mike Head, 57, an SEP national committee member, WWSW correspondent and University of Western Sydney law lecturer, will contest the outer south-western seat of **Fowler**. The area includes major working class suburbs and newer outlying areas where young families are struggling with rising home repayments and record levels of personal debt. Head will challenge former union official Chris Hayes, whom Labor's factional bosses shunted into the electorate from neighbouring Werriwa to make way for another MP, Laurie Ferguson, whose seat was abolished in an electoral redistribution.

In the industrial city of **Newcastle**, 170 kilometres north of Sydney, the SEP's candidate is **Noel Holt**, 62, a retired Telstra worker with 41 years' service. Holt also contested the seat in 2007, warning of the pro-business character of a Rudd Labor government. Newcastle used to be one of the country's biggest industrial centres, with mining, steelworks, docks and railways. Over the past 30 years, thousands of permanent jobs have been eliminated through closures, leaving school leavers to compete for casual and part-time jobs in call centres and the retail and service sectors.

In Western Australia, **Joe Lopez**, a 45-year-old hospital worker, will stand in **Swan**, the same seat he contested in 2007. The electorate features sections of light industry, the railway marshalling yards, and Perth's international and domestic airport terminals. It contains a large population of students from Curtin University, and is currently held by the Liberal Party's Steve Irons by a slim margin. Lopez, a member of the party since 1984, has written for the WWSW on the devastating consequences of the underfunding of the public health system and of escalating living costs that lie behind the image of Western Australia as a "boom" mining state.

In Victoria, the SEP's Senate team is **Patrick O'Connor** and **Keo Vongvixay**. O'Connor, 30, joined the party in 2003, is a national committee member who has written extensively for the WWSW on international and Australian politics, including Canberra's neo-colonial operations in the Asia-Pacific region. **Vongvixay** is a 39-year-old health worker who came to Australia as a young boy with his family from Laos in 1981. He first became attracted to the SEP during its 1996 federal election campaign because of the party's internationalist perspective.

For the northern Melbourne working class seat of **Calwell**, the party's candidate is **Peter Byrne**, 51, an architect and son of a car worker, who joined the SEP in 1983. For more than two decades, he has played a leading role in the work of the party's Melbourne area, including in campaigns to defend the jobs and basic rights of car workers, building workers, pilots and teachers. Calwell is home to the Ford motor company and associated car parts suppliers where workers face the continual threat of closure and the slashing of conditions. With a growing population of Iraqi and other immigrant families, the electorate extends out to Craigieburn and Sunbury, encompassing newer housing developments in northern mortgage-belt suburbs like Roxburgh Park.

Tania Baptist, 38, a law clerk who joined the party in 2006, is the candidate for **Gellibrand**, an inner-western electorate that covers the working class suburbs of Footscray, Altona, Braybrook, Brooklyn, Maidstone, Yarraville and Williamstown. It was once the industrial heart of Melbourne, the site of major meatworks, tanneries, ship building, ammunitions, petrochemical, railway workshops and automobile construction. Much of this industry was shut down in the 1980s and 1990s under the Hawke and Keating Labor governments. It remains the site of major workplaces, including a Toyota car plant, petrochemicals and Tenix shipbuilding, as well as Victoria University. Baptist, who stood on the SEP's Senate ticket in Victoria in 2007, will challenge Health Minister Nicola Roxon, who is in charge of Labor's blueprint to cut long-term health spending.

The SEP urges all supporters and readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* to give their full support to the SEP's election campaign by distributing our election statements, donating to our \$40,000 election fund, attending our regular election committee meetings in each electorate, voting for our candidates and above all by joining and building the SEP as the new socialist and internationalist party of the working class.

Authorised by N. Beams, 307 Macquarie St, Liverpool, NSW 2170



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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