

Vote for a socialist perspective in the New South Wales election

**The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
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The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers and young people to vote for our candidates in the March 26 New South Wales state election: James Cogan in Marrickville, Richard Phillips in Bankstown, Carolyn Kennett in Auburn and Noel Holt in Newcastle. A vote for the SEP's candidates is a vote for the independent interests of the working class against the parties of the political establishment—Labor, Liberal-National and the Greens. It is a vote for a socialist and internationalist perspective against social inequality, the erosion of democratic rights, militarism and war.

This election is looming as a historic debacle for the Australian Labor Party (ALP), which has held government in NSW since 1995. Repudiating even the pretence of advocating social reform, Labor's years in office have been marked by ever closer relations with investment banks, property developers and other business interests. Working people, by contrast, have suffered soaring household costs, declining living standards and deteriorating health and transport infrastructure.

Labor clung to power in the 2007 state election due to an advertising campaign that claimed the conservative coalition parties would attack workers' conditions and privatise public services. In 2011, a last-ditch appeal along similar "lesser evil" lines by Labor premier Kristina Keneally has had no impact. For 16 years, Labor has presided over the same agenda it accused the Liberals of wanting to implement.

Final opinion polls show just 23 percent support for Labor—the same as before the campaign began. The ALP appears likely to register its lowest vote in Australian electoral history, and to struggle to win even two dozen seats in the 93-seat NSW lower house.

The collapse in support for Labor is part of a national trend. In recent elections, the ALP has lost government in Western Australia and Victoria; barely kept office in South Australia and the Northern Territory; and was forced into coalition with the Greens in Tasmania. In last August's federal election, Labor was the first one-term government to fail to win a majority since 1931. It retained power only by forming an unstable minority government with support from the Greens and three rural independents.

Such is the hostility to Labor that former NSW premier Bob Carr has warned that its very survival is in doubt once it is deprived of the privileges of power. Its membership and branch structure have collapsed and it will no longer receive inflows of corporate donations.

It is so clear to everyone that the looming landslide to the Liberal-National parties is nothing but a negative vote against Labor's pro big-business record, that many within Liberal party ranks are becoming nervous.

Opposition leader Barry O'Farrell has conducted a so-called "small target" campaign, issuing promises that his government will be "moderate" and spend billions to improve dysfunctional services. It is common knowledge in ruling circles, however, that the financial markets are already insisting that the next government implement budget cuts to the largest areas of spending—public education and health—and sell off remaining state-owned assets.

The type of measures that will be unveiled after the election was revealed last week in the leaked report prepared for the Keneally government on education. It proposed \$1.8 billion in education cuts, using the NAPLAN performance tests to justify the closure of 100 schools with less than 400 pupils, and the elimination of 9,000 teaching and support jobs. O'Farrell and the Liberal-National parties have announced audits into 47 areas of spending to identify where assets can be sold and other public sector jobs and services cut.

A new period of class struggle, militarism and war

The Socialist Equality Party is the only party that has raised the major issues facing the working class during the mind-numbing official election campaign. Above all, the establishment parties and the media have sought to block any discussion over the consequences of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis—the greatest failure of the world capitalist economy since the 1930s.

In response to this crisis, the Australian ruling elite is demanding the slashing of public spending in order to lower business taxes and attract foreign investment. It is insisting that workers' living standards be driven down to the levels being imposed on workers across Europe and the United States, where austerity budget measures are being combined with outright cuts to wages, pensions and working conditions.

The federal Labor government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard will meet these demands by announcing savage reductions in welfare, health and education spending in the May budget. Every state government will work alongside Gillard to implement this agenda.

Labor, with the support of the Greens, is committed to imposing a

carbon tax that will be used to hand billions of dollars to the big corporate polluters and so-called “green” companies, as well as help finance the planned corporate and income tax cuts. None of these measures will do anything to arrest global warming, while ordinary people will be left to try and pay inflated prices for energy, fuel and other essentials.

At the same time, the Labor government has aggressively aligned itself with the increasingly confrontational stance of the United States against China—its main rival for economic dominance in the Asia-Pacific—without so much as a public discussion. This month, Gillard, during her sycophantic visit to Washington, offered Australia as the southern base for stepped-up US military operations in the region and gave a blanket commitment of Australian forces to the decade-long war in Afghanistan.

While Gillard was fawning to the Obama administration in the US, Labor foreign minister Kevin Rudd was serving as one of its main international mouthpieces in the Middle East, issuing demands that the Arab League and the United Nations give a green light to another criminal US-led war, this time on Libya.

The assertion that Libya is being bombed to “protect civilians” is a transparent lie. Over the last decade, the US government and its allies have slaughtered hundreds of thousands of civilians in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan in order to dominate key oil-producing and strategic regions of the world. US-backed dictatorships are continuing to shoot down civilian protestors with impunity in Bahrain and Yemen, while preparing for further brutal repression in Egypt.

The assault on Libya is a neo-colonial grab for control of the country’s oil, as well as a ruthless attempt to intimidate the mass revolutionary struggles that have erupted in Egypt and across the Middle East and North Africa.

Labor’s support for the bombing of Libya has been fully backed by the Liberal opposition and the Greens. The line-up is only the latest demonstration that there are no fundamental differences between the major parties on foreign and domestic policy. It has also exposed the fraudulent portrayal by the pseudo-left Socialist Alliance of the Greens as an “antiwar” alternative to Labor. The Greens have long been at the forefront of using “humanitarian” justifications for military action, including the occupations of East Timor and the Solomon Islands by Australian imperialism.

Build the Socialist Equality Party

As in Europe, the Middle East, the United States and around the world, mass struggles against austerity measures and militarism will inevitably erupt in Australia.

The SEP’s election campaign has been aimed at preparing for these struggles. Our candidates have stressed that workers must draw the necessary conclusions from their bitter experiences with the Labor Party and the trade unions and strike out on a new political road. Anger and hostility toward the parliamentary setup must now become the basis for the development of an independent political movement of the working class, based on a socialist perspective and aimed against the entire economic and social order.

The degeneration of the ALP and the transformation of the trade unions into openly corporatist agencies over the past three decades cannot be put down simply to corrupt leaders. It stems from the collapse of the entire nationalist and reformist perspective upon which Labor was founded 120 years ago. The globalisation of capitalist production has shattered any ability to regulate national economies and compelled every pro-capitalist organisation to attack its own working class in the name of “international competitiveness”.

The way forward for the working class is to build the Socialist Equality Party, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist party, as the new political party of the working class.

Against poverty, exploitation and war—the only future offered by capitalism and its defenders—the SEP insists that every man, woman and child has fundamental social rights, including full time employment, a living income, free health and education, quality and affordable housing, access to culture and the arts, public transport, a safe environment, democratic rights and an end to militarism.

Throughout our campaign, we have told workers the truth: none of these social rights are compatible with the failed capitalist system. Neither can they be achieved through parliament. Their realisation requires nothing less than the building of a socialist and internationalist movement of the working class to overthrow the profit system and establish a workers’ government, in unity with workers around the world. The vast productive capacity and wealth of society must be taken out of the hands of the financial and corporate elite, placed under public ownership and democratic control, and reorganised to meet social needs, not private profit.

We urge workers and young people in Marrickville, Bankstown, Auburn and Newcastle to indicate their support for this program by voting 1 for the SEP’s candidates. Due to anti-democratic obstacles, agreed by all the parliamentary parties, our candidates will not be identified with the Socialist Equality Party on the ballot paper.

Above all, we urge all those workers and young people throughout the country who agree with our principles and program to make the decision to join and build the Socialist Equality Party as the new mass revolutionary party of the working class.

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