

WSWS speaks to workers and youth in Melbourne and Tuggerah

Our reporters
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Following Socialist Equality Party public meetings in Melbourne and Tuggerah yesterday, some of those in attendance spoke with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters. Those who came to the SEP meetings raised a range of issues, from the turmoil in the Labor Party to widening social inequality and hardship and concerns about the NSA revelations.

Jim, a student at Melbourne's RMIT said: "I hadn't heard about the foreign policy issues involved in the coup before. I really think Rudd's going to do the same as Gillard. It's a different face for the same power. And I think that would be the same for the Liberals as well. It's just switching between different faces. Both parties are mechanisms of the ruling class. It's like in America with the Democrats and Republicans... The working class needs an alternative. We need a party of our own like the Socialist Equality Party."

Jamie, a road worker, attended the Tuggerah meeting after being encouraged by a friend. "I sort of read about it but brushed it off at the time," he explained. "Then I got the election statement in my letterbox, opposing the drive to war. I nearly threw it out, but I thought I'd keep reading it and the more I read the more I'm thinking, 'Yes, yes, yes, totally'."

He continued: "Today's meeting brought up issues that really should be common knowledge in every household so it was just really good to come here... Between myself and my friends there's been a wedge over the years because I've always hated Labor, I really hate. I haven't voted for nearly six years because none of the major parties, when it gets down to the actual policies, really do anything for me... It's us and them, it's the ruling elite and the rest of us. Why shouldn't there be more equality? I can see what the party's trying to achieve and I just want to jump onboard."

Manan is a full-time architecture student at the University of Newcastle who was born in India and grew up in Singapore. "The meeting shed light on the forces that were influential in the change from Rudd to Gillard," he said, "and it is shocking that this is not being talked about in the mainstream media."

He added: "The information in the report really showed how intimate the relationship is between American and Australian politics, and how Washington has the capacity and means to depose and put in a leader which is more in tune with their political line... I would like to support the SEP election campaign because you are spreading awareness and raising the political consciousness of workers around the world."

Karlie is a full-time student studying mathematics at the University of Newcastle and spoke about the escalating economic and social crisis in Australia.

"In the meeting it was brought up that Australia's economy is not as strong as is portrayed in the media. I had my own personal belief that this was the case, based on what I saw was happening all across the world with other economies breaking down. This was reinforced in my day-to-day life by seeing people losing their jobs—not just factory workers but mining workers as well."

She explained how many unemployed workers in the area were turning to the military. "What is hard for the people losing their jobs is that they have trades and apprenticeships they were completing through the mines, and the only way they see to complete them is to turn to the defence force. I have met at least thirty people like this who have stated they felt it was their only option as they had to complete their apprenticeships. It is scary that they are in this position, but it is scarier to think that with Australia gearing up for war, more young people's lives will be pushed

down this path.”

Karlie explained why she was supporting the SEP campaign. “It comes back to a point made today—that the importance of the campaign is not being voted into parliament but raising the political consciousness of people. This is important, because at the moment most Australians have no understanding of what is happening politically. I believe the SEP is really blunt and honest with their analysis and sometimes it can be hard to take in, however, it is the most truthful analysis of what is currently happening, not just in Australia but internationally.”

Loon, a sales worker in Melbourne, said: “I preferred Rudd because he was elected and Gillard had the stigma of being a backstabber who didn’t win the election. That was the main reason. A first-term prime minister should contest in the next election. He shouldn’t have been removed.”

Asked his opinion of the SEP’s analysis of the 2010 coup and recent leadership change, Loon said: “The analysis opened my eyes to more of the background; what the international influence was, rather than the Australian media saying it was just about the mining tax or opinion polls and ignoring the deeper issues, that the Americans had a hold on Australia to press their status quo onto the current situation... Now the capitalist elite need to control the Labor Party, and if it did diminish into nothingness, there might only be one party that the elite would not have full control over.”

Adil who works as a driver said: “People I know think that things will turn for the worse if Abbott gets in. They think they already know what Kevin’s about. But what’s his agenda? What’s he going to do? When he got elected in 2007 I thought he would make changes for the better, but things changed very quickly.”

Angela was born in Liverpool, England, and now resides in Gosford on the NSW Central Coast, where she is employed as a casual child care worker. She explained that in the past she had always voted Labor, adding “my grandmother was a suffragette and I was told to always vote, don’t waste it.”

She continued: “When I came to Australia, my main aim was to become an Australian citizen so I could vote in elections. I felt as though I was doing something and taking part in politics. Things have now changed. Labor is not the lesser of two evils. I can’t see any difference

between Labor and the other political parties. They do not represent us... I think that all the things that we fought for over the years are being taken away. In my area, child care centres are being privatised and staff put on three-month contracts. Workers who want job security transfer to other council run centres, so casual employees’ hours are cut.”

Angela said that she was shocked when she heard that the Gillard government had allowed the US to set up a Marine base in Darwin.

“The people had no say in it, so we could not oppose it,” she said. “There was no debate in parliament, no referendum, nothing. It is scary that the US will also be allowed to put drones on the Cocos Islands. This shows that the governments are preparing for confrontation with China. What military agreements does Australia have with the US? We don’t know.”

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