

SEP 2013 election campaign reaches wide sections of workers and youth

The Socialist Equality Party
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The campaign of the Socialist Equality Party in the 2013 Australian federal election was the longest and most wide-ranging that the party has conducted. Spanning over four months, its aim was to generate the broadest discussion in the working class on a socialist and internationalist perspective to meet the dangers of war, the assault on living standards and the attack on democratic rights. The campaign was directed toward the unification of workers and young people across the Asia-Pacific region and internationally, and sought to combat the conspiracy of silence that surrounds the preparations by the United States and its allies—with Australia in the forefront—for a military confrontation with China.

To reach the widest sections of workers and youth, the SEP stood 10 candidates for the Senate, two in each of the five states of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. Over the course of the campaign, SEP candidates and members prepared 115 articles, reports, comments, interviews, reports and video presentations for the *World Socialist Web Site* and the party's election web site. Close to 250,000 copies of the party's four-page election statements were distributed at shopping centres, factories, railway stations, on door-knocks and by house-to-house letterboxing, along with many thousands of other leaflets.

We held dozens of public meetings across Australia during the campaign, in working class suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, as well as in the regional centres of Newcastle, Wollongong and Geelong and the New South Wales Central Coast town of Tuggerah. SEP branches organised election committee meetings, meet-the-candidate forums and numerous other discussions with workers and youth. As part of an international campaign launched by the *World Socialist Web Site*, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the party's youth movement, held meetings on university campuses around Australia to fight

for the defence of American whistle-blower Edward Snowden and of fundamental democratic rights.

In a powerful expression of the internationalism of the campaign, SEP candidates addressed public meetings in Sri Lanka and New Zealand, raising the common danger of war confronting workers throughout the region and the world. James Cogan, the party's assistant national secretary and candidate for South Australia, was warmly received in Sri Lanka, speaking at public meetings in Colombo and Galle, and conducting press conferences and media interviews. He also held lively discussions with free trade zone workers, who expressed great interest in the experiences and problems of the Australian working class. In New Zealand, Nick Beams, the SEP's national secretary and lead candidate for New South Wales, addressed a public meeting in Wellington and campaigned among university students, exposing the nature of the US pivot and its impact on every country in the Asia-Pacific region.

In the final weeks, Jerry White, the SEP (US) presidential candidate in 2012, travelled to Australia in a further demonstration of the internationalist axis of the campaign. White spoke to meetings of students in Sydney and Melbourne opposing the US-led drive to war against Syria, and addressed Ford workers outside the factory in Broadmeadows on the role of the Obama administration and the American trade unions in devastating the jobs and conditions of American auto workers. He presented a powerful report to the party's final election meetings in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane on the unprecedented levels of social inequality in the US and the police state measures that have been prepared to suppress popular opposition.

Throughout the campaign, workers and youth responded with surprise and shock to the analyses presented by party members and supporters on the role of new US bases in northern and western Australia in US war plans against

China. Many expressed anger at the extent to which the Labor government, with the complicity of the Greens and behind the backs of the Australian population, had given unconditional support to the Obama administration's aggressive militarism in the region and internationally.

On August 1, Nick Beams and Peter Symonds, the lead candidate in Western Australia and national editor of the WSWS, exposed the disinformation and lies that surround the US pivot during the question session of a debate organised by the organisation IQ2 on the US-Australia military alliance. The event, held at Angel Place in Sydney, was attended by over 1,200 people. Among those who had spoken in support of the alliance was the US ambassador, Jeffrey Bleich, who has played a central role in overseeing the ever closer integration of Australian foreign policy with that of Washington.

The questions to Bleich posed by Beams raised US involvement in the ousting of Kevin Rudd as prime minister in 2010 to ensure Australia's alignment with the war preparations against China. Symonds denounced the preparations of the Obama administration for an attack on Syria and documented the role of the US base at Pine Gap in drone assassinations and worldwide American spying. (See: "SEP candidates challenge US ambassador")

On September 3, Beams also asked pointed questions at a local debate involving Labor Deputy Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Greens candidate Hall Greenland that exposed the subservience of both parties to US militarism and their unanimity with the looming attack on Syria. The event was videoed and published by the SEP. (See: "A revealing candidates forum in Sydney")

The intensity and scope of the SEP's campaign, and the critical issues it raised, were deliberately censored by the mass media, most notably by the public broadcasters, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). While some radio stations interviewed SEP candidates, the party was subjected to a general black-out. By contrast, newly formed right-wing populist organisations, such as the Palmer United Party of multi-millionaire mining magnate Clive Palmer, were given on-going coverage.

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The final vote count for the Senate will not be known for several weeks. Currently, however, the SEP candidates have collectively registered 7,408 votes, with just over 72 percent of the vote counted. By state, the totals so far are: New South Wales, 1,355; Victoria, 1,718; Queensland, 1,275; Western Australia, 780; and

South Australia, 2,280.

The vote was proportionally higher in South Australia because the SEP was drawn as the first group of candidates listed on the ballot paper, and so attracted a certain number of so-called "donkey votes." In other states, particularly New South Wales and Victoria, the SEP was allocated a position toward the far end of ballot papers that listed dozens of Senate groups and approached one metre in length. Electoral officials were compelled to provide some voters with magnifying glasses because the type size was so small.

To vote SEP was thus a highly conscious act. From Thursday to the close of the polling booths on Saturday, some 10,000 people visited the party's website for voting information. Significantly, given the broad appeal made by our campaign, votes were cast for the SEP in all of the 141 local electoral divisions in the five states in which the party stood, from the most remote rural areas, to regional towns and to suburbs throughout the major cities.

Nationally, more than 1,500 workers and youth signed up during street campaigns, at SEP meetings or online for further information on the SEP. Many hundreds donated amounts, both large and small to the party's election funds. Scores of people attended their first SEP meetings, volunteered to letter-box election statements, and assisted the party on polling day.

To those thousands who have been politically clarified and educated by the SEP campaign, we urge you to now take the next step. Firstly, we ask you to donate here to ensure we can go forward from the election in the best financial position. Secondly, and most importantly, we call on you to apply to join the Socialist Equality Party, the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, and begin to play your part in building it as the mass revolutionary party of the working class.



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