

# Australia: NSW voters denounce war and austerity

Our correspondents  
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*Workers, youth and students who spoke to WSWs correspondents outside election polling stations in New South Wales last Saturday discussed a range of political issues. This article, a second instalment (see part 1), features comments on welfare cuts, the danger of war and voting for the Socialist Equality Party.*

In Sydney's inner-west Summer Hill electorate, **Richard**, a journalism student, said the election was "a farce."

"A lot of young people want to withdraw from politics. They see it as pointless and only see Liberal and Labor and the Greens. The Greens have a very messed-up position. They often promise one thing but practise backflips in parliament ...

"The Greens are also very poor in dealing with asylum seekers and the closure of Aboriginal centres in Western Australia; they say things about the problem but they don't do anything about it."

Social workers **Bec** and **James** raised concerns about the escalating homelessness crisis.

"A lot of people think homelessness is a middle-aged guy sleeping on the street," Bec said, "but that's not the case anymore. It's mainly women and children. They can't afford to rent anywhere and the department of housing waiting lists is about 10 years."

James explained: "You can't afford to live anywhere near any major services or infrastructure if you're paying 30 percent of your income on rent. The department of housing says that people should move out to the far fringes of the city—away from your friends and family and your GP and where your kids go to school and your babysitters—and start from scratch."

Bec criticised the privatisation of welfare services. "Non-government organisations, like Mission Australia or the Salvation Army, apply to run these programs and whoever does it the cheapest and for the most profit

wins. I call it corporate welfare. People on the bottom lose out while these NGOs and charities, which are usually religious-based, are profiting from it."

James added: "NGO contracts come with de facto gag orders so that employees are not allowed to speak out about structural issues; their job is to run the service and not make a fuss. Any lobbying or activism risks funding."

In the Penrith electorate, in Sydney's outer west, **Matt** said he voted for the SEP because, "Labor and Liberal are the different sides of the same coin. Labor and the unions are just dancing to the same song."

At the pharmaceutical supplier where he works, Matt said the trade unions recently imposed an enterprise agreement despite workers constantly rejecting the company's demands. "It was a farce," he said. "Nothing ever changed. There was never any negotiating with the company. It was just, 'This is what you are getting.'"

Asked about a socialist and internationalist movement of the working class to put an end to capitalism, Matt replied: "We have got the numbers, we have got the brain power and we are the ones that do the work."

Education worker **Melissa** voted for the Greens "because I can't cope with the idea of the complete climate change denial from Liberal governments."

The Greens called for "a conversation about war" before any Australian military commitment, Melissa continued, "but I think a better conversation would be: 'How do you not go?'"

"People generally don't get enough information regarding war," Melissa added. The population was told little about "Australia's involvement in [US] spy bases and troops in Darwin, which concerns me ... I'm interested to get more information, because you said things that resonate with me."

**Kate and Troy Lancaster** opposed the racist, right-wing campaign to prevent the establishment of a mosque near Penrith. “I think it’s a bit insular,” Troy said. “The way we have gone with globalisation, the nation-state itself is not what it used to be. We are all citizens of the earth now rather than identifying with a nation ... To say that some people shouldn’t be practising certain religious beliefs in one area of the globe is just not right.”

In the Wyong electorate, north of Sydney, **Mark**, a retired teacher and academic, said he voted for the SEP after receiving its election statement in his letterbox and then reading the *World Socialist Web Site*. He said “a lot of essential issues” were not discussed in the election, including “equality of society, equity of access to social welfare and looking after those who are not capable of looking after themselves.”

Mark explained: “I have a severely disabled son and year-after-year we have to fight to get assistance for care and treatment ... Health is in a parlous state. Expenditure on ‘law and order’ is being pushed to the forefront but society is breaking down and nothing is being done to fix it.”

Mark spoke about the danger of war. “I don’t like the US’s increase of its military in the Pacific and Australia’s full backing of it. America seems to be trying to stop China’s expansion and get countries around China on side in some type of alliance—even its economic rival Japan. They will put pressure on those countries which they will not be able to resist.”

In Sydney’s western Bankstown electorate, **Mohammed**, a Palestinian bio-medical engineer who has four children, said he opposed compulsory voting. “This should be a matter of choice and not punished by fines. How is that democracy?”

Commenting on the escalating US-led war in Iraq, he said: “I oppose war and have seen it since I was a child in the Middle East. The US has always been behind the wars in the Middle East. It’s about oil and for their own benefits ... the US is responsible for deliberate criminal actions and has killed thousands of people.”

**Dasha**, a social work student, voted for the SEP “as a protest against the two-party system. I don’t agree with either Liberal or Labor. I also agree that there should be equality, particularly because we live in a world with many bureaucratic problems.”

Dasha opposed increased military spending. “Liberal

and Labor have double standards—they say spend millions on the military and yet claim they have no money for poor people ...

“I’m originally from Russia and the attitude of the government and the media here is very concerning ... The US is interfering in Ukraine and has ruined the relationship between the Russian and Ukrainian people. I was shocked when [Prime Minister] Tony Abbott said he was going to shirtfront Putin in Queensland. He was really saying that people should hate Russia. He’s like a puppet for America. America seems to have a list of countries that it will attack. It is turning on Russia and China is also on the list.”

**Natasha**, a young mother with two children, said: “I voted for the Socialist Equality Party because what you said makes a lot of sense. Young people should have a voice, when it comes to our country, what it stands for and our future.

“Kids are trying to get into TAFE [Technical and Further Education] but there’s not enough funding ... There are good people out there; they may not have a job but they’re trying to make a difference and have a life.”

**Lynette** said she voted for the SEP. “I’m sick and tired of the major parties. The politicians that join these parties are career politicians. They’re opportunistic, they rise up within the ranks of their own parties like little parasites ... I wanted to give you guys a vote because I see that you have the most authentic commitment to your ideology.

“We’re living in a period where the divide between the haves and have-nots has never been greater. And there’s no genuine commitment to closing that gap. It’s becoming a more cut-throat society, where the needs of the wealthy and the powerful and the influential are met.”



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