

# The SEP candidates in the 2016 Australian election

**The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)**  
23 May 2016

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is standing a Senate group in New South Wales (NSW), Victoria and Queensland, and candidates in the House of Representatives' electorates of Grayndler and Blaxland in Sydney and Wills in Melbourne.

As our election statement explains, the SEP campaign and candidates will appeal to all those who want to fight against militarism, nationalism, the persecution of refugees, and the endless assault on social and democratic rights. It is aimed at raising the political consciousness of workers and youth and unifying the working class in Australia, Asia, the Americas and internationally in a common struggle to end the capitalist profit system.

## Senate in NSW

**James Cogan**, 46, is the SEP's national secretary and will head the party's Senate group in NSW. James joined the Trotskyist movement in 1991, during the first Gulf War against Iraq, in response to the International Committee of the Fourth International's analysis of the crisis and collapse of Stalinism and the party's internationalist and socialist opposition to the Labor Party. Since 1998, he has been a member of the editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site*.

James was elected assistant national secretary of the SEP in 2012 and national secretary in February 2015. He has represented the SEP in each federal and NSW state election since 2004. Over the past five years, he has written numerous articles and spoken at dozens of public meetings, university forums and International Committee of the Fourth International and SEP events warning of Australia's participation in the US "pivot to Asia," the conspiracy of silence surrounding it, and the danger of the outbreak of a catastrophic war.

**John Davis**, 22, is the SEP's second candidate for the Senate in NSW. John applied to join the Socialist Equality Party in 2013, based on his support for the struggle for a socialist program against the drive to war and militarism. He is president of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) club at University of Newcastle, where he is currently completing a Bachelor of Arts degree.

John has played a leading role in the fight to build the IYSSE, in Newcastle and on the NSW Central Coast, among working-class youth and students who face a deepening social crisis that includes ongoing cuts to tertiary education and low-wage

casual work or permanent unemployment. John is standing for the first time as an SEP candidate.

## Senate in Victoria

**Chris Sinnema**, 45, heads the SEP's Senate group in Victoria. Chris joined the SEP in 1989, at the age of 18, and is a member of its National Committee. The son of a paper factory worker, he grew up in the industrial region of the Latrobe Valley. Chris has worked for many years in the transport industry, as a tram conductor, then driver at Melbourne's Essendon and Malvern Depot. He currently works as an interstate freight train driver.

During his 17 years in the tramways, Chris fought for the party's socialist perspective amongst his fellow workers, in opposition to victimisations and the ever-deepening attacks on jobs and conditions. These were carried out by both Labor and Liberal state and federal governments, with the support of the transport unions. Chris and his partner have two children.

**Peter Byrne**, 57, an architect and son of a car worker, joined the party in 1983. For three decades he has fought for a socialist perspective in the Melbourne area, including in campaigns to defend the jobs and basic rights of car workers, building workers, pilots and teachers. He is married with two adult daughters.

Peter has particular knowledge of the issues facing workers in the car industry. In the 2010 federal election, he stood for the SEP in the seat of Calwell, where the Ford Broadmeadows car plant is located. He has also represented the SEP in the state seat of Broadmeadows in Victorian elections and by-elections. In the 2013 federal election, Peter stood for the Senate in South Australia, campaigning in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, which will be devastated by the closure of the General Motors Holden plant at the end of 2017.

## Senate in Queensland

**Mike Head**, 63, is an SEP national committee member, WSWs correspondent and Western Sydney University law lecturer. A member of the party for more than 40 years, he is married with three adult children.

Mike writes regularly for the WSWs on the bipartisan assault against democratic rights, as well as on other political, economic and social issues. He has represented the party in several elections and stood in 2013 as an SEP candidate for the

Senate in Queensland. In recent years, he has conducted political work regularly in the Brisbane area, building the influence of the SEP among workers and young people.

**Erin Cooke**, 41, joined the SEP in 2015 after becoming a regular reader of the *World Socialist Web Site* throughout the previous decade. Erin made the decision to join the party on the basis that it was the only one warning workers and young people of the growing danger of war and providing a genuine socialist program for the working class.

Married with two daughters, Erin comes from a working-class background in northern Brisbane, where he has lived all his life, working mainly as a storeman and factory worker. He is standing for the first time as an SEP candidate.

#### **House of Representatives**

##### **Oscar Grenfell for Grayndler!**

**Oscar Grenfell**, 24, was born and raised in Sydney's inner-west. He completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Sydney, majoring in English literature.

Oscar has been a regular correspondent for the *World Socialist Web Site* for the past year, writing on the social and political issues confronting students and young people. He has played a leading role in the SEP's youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, including against attempts by university authorities to block the IYSSE from advancing its socialist, anti-war, and anti-capitalist perspective to students on several Australian university campuses.

The SEP's campaign in Grayndler, which encompasses a number of diverse suburbs in Sydney's inner-west, will focus on exposing the right-wing, pro-capitalist politics of the Greens and their various pseudo-left supporters, who promote the lie that Labor and the Greens are a "lesser evil" than the Liberals. The seat is held by key Labor powerbroker and former deputy prime minister Anthony Albanese.

##### **Gabriela Zabala for Blaxland!**

**Gabriela Zabala**, 52, has been a member of the SEP since 1997. Emigrating to Australia from Uruguay in 1970, she has three children and is an academic teacher in arts and social sciences at Western Sydney University College.

Gabriela has fought for the party's socialist perspective among workers and young people in Sydney's western and south western suburbs for many years. She stood as an SEP candidate for the Senate in NSW in 2010 and in Queensland in 2013.

The working-class areas of Blaxland suffer from high levels of youth unemployment and social deprivation. The electorate includes suburbs that have been the target of some of the most intense police surveillance and raids, under the pretext of combatting "radicalism" and "terrorism." Muslim immigrant communities have been demonised and marginalised by 15 years of state and media-manufactured propaganda to justify Australian involvement in the US-led wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Gabriela will be standing against the Labor incumbent, Jason Clare, who served as minister for defence materiel in 2012 and 2013, as the Gillard Labor government committed Australia to the purchase of tens of billions of dollars in new military hardware.

##### **Will Fulgenzi for Wills!**

**Will Fulgenzi**, 23, is a member of the national committee of the Socialist Equality Party. He became politicised by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and applied to join the party in 2008, at the age of 15, while still in high school.

Will studied for a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Melbourne, majoring in mathematical physics, and is now completing his final year of a research master's degree in physics at the same university.

Will plays a leading role in the SEP's student and youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, and has led the fight to overturn an ongoing ban on the IYSSE by the Clubs & Societies Committee of the University of Melbourne Student Union. He contributes articles to the *World Socialist Web Site* on scientific issues, as well as on the work of the IYSSE and the social crisis facing young people.

The electorate of Wills covers the Melbourne suburbs of Brunswick, Coburg, Hadfield, Glenroy, Pascoe Vale and Oak Park and borders the University of Melbourne. A number of manufacturing companies operate in the western and northern areas of the electorate.

Will is standing against the candidates of the Greens, Labor and the pseudo-left Socialist Alliance, all of whom are seeking to divert the immense hostility among workers and young people to the official establishment back behind the moribund parliamentary system.

To get involved in the campaign, sign up at <http://www.sep.org.au/> today.

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To contact the WWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[www.wsws.org/contact](http://www.wsws.org/contact)**