

Australian youth speak out against climate change

Our reporters

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On Friday, thousands of students and youth around Australia took part in a “national day of action” against climate change. Rallies were held in regional centres and capital cities across the country.

The events followed worldwide March 15 protests, in which tens of thousands of young people throughout Australia participated.

Since then, the Greens, the unions, and environmental groups, such as Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) have intensified their efforts to subordinate the emerging movement of young people to the election of a Greens-backed Labor government.

The organisers divided young people up by staging dozens of smaller protests outside the offices of individual parliamentarians on Friday. This was tied to their bankrupt claims that big business politicians, who are responsible for environmental destruction, could be pressured to take action to stem climate change.

Expressing the widespread skepticism among students towards this perspective, Friday’s protests were far smaller than previous rallies.

Campaigners for the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth wing of the Socialist Equality Party, explained that climate change could not be halted within the framework of the capitalist market that had caused it.

They said that what was required was a turn to the working class, and the development of a revolutionary movement aimed at abolishing the profit system and replacing it with socialism: a global society based on social need and scientific planning.

IYSSE campaigners placed the danger of environmental catastrophe in the context of the deepening crisis of capitalism, expressed in the drive to war, mounting social inequality, and the attacks on Julian Assange and democratic rights. Students

responded warmly, with many taking copies of the SEP’s 2019 federal election statement.

In Melbourne, high school student **Mia**, said: “I think it’s good that children are getting out there. It shows that it’s an actual problem and it needs to be dealt with.”

Asked if she thought the major parties would act on climate change, Mia responded: “I think they’re all in it for themselves, for their own profit. I feel like they have things that they deem more important than the futures of their children and their grandchildren on their minds. Whatever is going to make them the most money is what they deem most important.”

In response to the program of the IYSSE, **Theo**—a year nine student from inner Melbourne—said: “Creating an international organization of the youth that will take action on climate change is a really good idea because there is a lot of us and we are all really passionate and we will get it done.”

Katerina and Georgia, journalism students at Melbourne’s La Trobe University, initially attended the rally as part of an assignment.

However, Katerina explained: “I knew what it was about and the causes. It blew my mind to see so many children with nothing to lose protesting today. I think the politicians need to listen.” She agreed that none of the major parties would do anything about climate change, saying “if you look at their track records, they’ve all gone back on their word. They might win us over with election promises, but no doubt this will keep going.”

They were buoyed to hear of the SEP’s campaign putting forward a socialist alternative to the capitalist profit system and were excited to meet SEP Victorian senate candidate, Tessa Pietsch—whose statement they were reading—at the rally.

Year 11 students **Zara**, **Heyma** and **Saskia** in the rally in the regional New South Wales city of Newcastle, attended by around 200 students.

Heyma said that students were protesting “because we thought it was important to voice our views about climate change and the lack of government action. This is a pressing issue, and the world is waking up to it. People are beginning to realise that they need to get involved in this. We need to get involved in strikes like this, get involved in politics and make sure we’re informed.”

Zara explained she thinks “governments haven’t taken any steps to resolve climate change because it’s an economic issue. The government just wants the rich to make heaps of money, they don’t care about the environment that they’re leaving behind for us, the younger generation. They only care about making profits. They only think about the short-term gains.”

“We want to spread awareness that we’re ready to fight for this,” Saskia added. “We’re fighting to protect the environment and our future. The whole of society needs to change, not just particular policies. The fact that this movement is international is important—it also shows the power of social media, in spreading movements like these and uniting young people, who are thinking about these things and want to take action.”

Aiden and Jackson, also in Newcastle, said that the organisers of the rallies “controlled these protests as well. We weren’t allowed to go into the main streets, we weren’t allowed to actually make an impact, and just then at the end, we were pushed even off that small road. We were only allowed to go up one street and then had to stop.”

They said that the promotion of Labor and the Greens was “another attempt to keep us in our place” and concluded “I agree with everything you’ve said, we’re already socialists, actually!”

Kyle, a year 10 student who attended the inner-Sydney Marrickville protest said he thinks climate change “is one of the most important issues we face seeing as it involves the whole planet.”

“I’m anti-capitalism in general. A lot of people say that you have to make changes in yourself, but there is a big problem with the way companies are working. They are not changing what they are doing. They are telling us that we can change, but they need to change

what they are doing in a big way.”

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