

Greens offer bogus climate pledges while pleading for another partnership with Labor

Mike Head: SEP candidate for Oxley
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For the 2019 election, the Greens are falsely presenting themselves as the party that can avert the worsening global climate change disaster that has triggered school strikes by students across the country, and internationally.

When Greens leader Senator Richard Di Natale addressed the National Press Club last week, his speech was billed as unveiling “a comprehensive, fully costed plan” to achieve “100 percent renewables by 2030.”

Yet, the axis of his speech was to appeal to Labor Party leader Bill Shorten for a partnership with the Greens to form government after the election, as his predecessor Julia Gillard did in 2010. “We want to work constructively,” Di Natale pleaded. “We want to negotiate.”

Di Natale refused to rule out anything in striking a climate policy deal with Labor. His party would not even give a “blanket no” to dubious international carbon permits, by which transnational corporations continue their polluting activities by purchasing so-called offsets.

In other words, while claiming to be able to radically reform Australia’s entire economy, which depends heavily on coal and gas, by 2030 the Greens are seeking to prop up yet another big business Labor government.

A closer examination of the Greens “plan” demonstrates that it is not about saving the environment and the planet, but handing billions of dollars in subsidies and incentives to supposedly “green” companies.

The Greens’ web site speaks of a “clear and achievable plan to encourage billions of investment.” But, under capitalism, such investment is made on one basis only—the extraction of private profit through the exploitation of the working class.

In reality, the Greens want to make Australian capitalism more profitable by turning it into a “renewable energy superpower.” A Clean Energy Export Development Fund would dole out subsidies to “create ‘solar fuels’ export hubs in strategic locations around Australia.”

Such handouts would be bonanza for the global energy giants, many of which also claim to be transitioning to renewable energy, as well as the “green” financiers and entrepreneurs who form a significant part of the Greens’ social base.

Another plank in the “plan” is to “restore a price on carbon.” It proposes a return to a carbon tax like the one that the Gillard government imposed in 2010. According to the web site: “The carbon pricing mechanism that operated from 2012 to 2014 saw the greatest reduction in emissions ever recorded in Australia.”

That is an outright fabrication. Under the carbon tax, annual emissions continued to remain at near-record levels, over 500 million tonnes, and would have done so for the foreseeable future.

Like all “solutions” based on the capitalist market, the carbon tax left climate policy in the grip of the same profit-driven forces that have produced the disaster. It allowed the corporate polluters to maintain their operations, and profits, while working class households paid the price via soaring electricity and gas prices.

The Socialist Equality Party alone stands for urgent action on climate change, against all the parties of the political establishment, including the Greens.

Our election manifesto explains that capitalism is an outmoded system, based on the division of the world into antagonistic nation-states, and the dominance of the profit dictates of the corporate elite over every aspect of social life.

The only way to halt the destruction of the environment, as well as to end war, poverty and the attacks on democratic rights, is to abolish capitalism and reorganise society along socialist lines. We state:

“Real action to arrest global warming necessitates conscious economic planning on a national and international scale. The first step, therefore, in halting a climate disaster requires that the major corporations, above all those bearing central responsibility for pollutants, be taken out of private hands, and placed under public ownership and democratic control.”

At the Press Club, Di Natale said the Greens-backed Gillard government had shown the Greens could work well with Labor. The next parliament was a “chance to do big things again.” Apart from the carbon tax, what were these “big things?”

The Greens, who once appealed to students and young people by posturing as anti-war, backed a government that signed up to the US “pivot” to Asia, a provocative strategy based on militarily encircling China, including by hosting US Marines in Darwin. In line with its commitment to Washington, Gillard’s government also fully supported the US vendetta against journalist and WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange.

The Greens claim to fight for economic equality, but they propped up the Gillard government as it stripped parent payment benefits from tens of thousands of single mothers, privatised disability services and undermined public education through NAPLAN standardised testing.

And despite the Greens’ feigned sympathy for asylum seekers, the Labor government reopened the barbaric refugee prisons on Nauru and Manus Island and proclaimed that none of the detainees would ever be permitted to settle in Australia.

In his speech, Di Natale dismissed a partnership, for now, with the Liberal-National Coalition, which brazenly defends the interests of the coal, oil and gas miners. But he held out the prospect of such an agreement if the Coalition got the “message” in Australia’s most affluent electorates, which the Greens are specifically targeting.

“The only hope for bipartisanship is that the Liberals get a hiding, especially in key seats like Kooyong and Higgins [two wealthy inner-Melbourne seats], and voters send a clear message that climate denialism and

coal hugging is no longer a viable political strategy.”

Di Natale personifies the Greens’ political transformation into an increasingly right-wing formation. Upon becoming party leader in 2015, he declared that his goal was to prepare the Greens to be “part of government,” as they had been already in Tasmania, where the Greens have supported both Labor and Liberal administrations.

The party’s base of support today centres on high income, upper-middle class constituencies, mostly working in academia, the public service and layers of business associated with the “green” corporate sector.

Ever since the Greens’ participation in the Gillard Labor government, the party’s vote has declined substantially in every state and federal election, especially in working class areas.

Nevertheless, with the entire political establishment increasingly despised by millions of people, the Greens are again offering their services to try to stabilise the parliamentary order, and the capitalist profit system that it serves.

We urge all workers, students and youth who want to fight climate change, and for a future, to study the SEP’s revolutionary socialist program and contact us to support our election campaign.

Authorised by James Cogan for the Socialist Equality Party, Suite 906, 185 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000.



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