

Australia's electoral laws a “naked power grab by the major parties,” say SEP electoral members

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is deepening its campaign against anti-democratic electoral laws pushed through parliament with Labor Party support on August 26.

The legislation forces the SEP and 35 other parties that do not have a seat in parliament to submit a list of 1,500 members to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), treble the previous number.

These smaller parties have less than three months to present their new list of members or face deregistration, even as the Delta variant is infecting working class communities across the country. Without registration, parties cannot run in the federal elections with their own name on the ballot paper. The AEC also has the power to decide which parties can include certain words in their registered name, such as “socialist” or “communist.”

On Sunday, September 19, the SEP is holding an online public meeting, to discuss the campaign and how to take forward the fight against these anti-democratic laws. [Click here to register.](#)

The SEP is appealing to all supporters and readers to join the campaign, become an electoral member and take forward the fight for a socialist perspective at the next election. The following comments are part of a series of statements from electoral members, *World Socialist Web Site* readers and others supporting this campaign.

Mohammad, whose parents are from Bangladesh, has been an electoral member for a year. He was studying statistics at university when he first met the SEP, about five years ago.

“I was surprised about how brazen the new election

laws are,” he said. “Normally when laws like this are introduced there’s some level of plausible deniability but I can’t see any justification from the government on what purpose it serves. It is simply a naked power grab by the major parties, with complete radio silence from the news media.

“They are all concerned about the growing disdain for the two-party system, as seen in the number of people voting for minor parties and independents. This is what the new laws are trying to stop. They want to remove these parties completely, if possible.”

Mohammad said he still remembered the first time he met SEP campaigners. “I struck up a conversation and was fascinated by this group, whose ideas were so alien to me. I had to try to understand these ideas, even though I initially disagreed,” he said.

“I attended meetings and for a long time was combative and enjoyed talking with people who see the world in a different way. Slowly these discussions started to make me realise that there’s a way to look at the world, and history, through a lens that you are simply not taught about at school and in the mainstream media.

“The Socialist Equality Party clearly had something to offer students and young people of all backgrounds, ideas that they were not receiving in any other way,” he added.

Mohammad explained that the SEP introduced him to a materialist analysis of history and “an understanding of the connection between the economic system and the exploitation of workers; how this leads to instability and the drive towards war. You don’t get that lens if you don’t engage with the SEP.

“So many of the SEP’s warnings have come to

fruition. Rising global conflicts, increasing anti-democratic efforts, such as this legislation, possible war with China and the degradation of workers' rights domestically and abroad.

"Before this I thought that history just happened; communism had been tried and failed. Somehow things just happen in the world—sometimes good, sometimes bad—but I had no way to collect this all together into a coherent understanding of world events."

Mohammad said that although he stopped attending SEP meetings for a couple of years, "All the conversations I had had with the party stuck with me and I began to realise that its analysis was not seen anywhere else. This drew me back.

"It is incredibly important that Australian voters resist these suppressive election laws and protect their democratic rights. Everyone should consider joining the SEP as an electoral member, out of principle on this issue, and to help the party get across the threshold of 1,500 members.

"The SEP is the loudest and most principled voice combatting and frustrating this attempt by the major parties to stifle democratic freedoms."

Adam, a subcontracted security guard, and a long-time supporter of the SEP decided to enrol with the AEC in order to vote and, most importantly, so he could become an SEP electoral member.

"The traditional parties have been around long enough to know they have to thwart all opposition to their policies," Adam said.

"These are the parties that are responsible for the high-end salaries, the withdrawal of welfare, inequality in the distribution of wealth and tax avoidance by the corporations. If the SEP were to become popular, this would present a major challenge to the monied interests these parties serve," he added.

Adam drew a connection between the current world situation and the period leading up to the French Revolution when there were "no restrictions" on the ruling classes.

"In the 1700s the upper classes continued to live a life of entitlement, while the price of basic household staples increased by fourfold, leading to mass poverty. We're heading in the same direction today—the fundamentals are the same. You have many people who can't get welfare and very soon you won't have a pension.

"But as in the French Revolution, when religion was being questioned and old defunct ideas were junked, many people today see capitalism as having failed. This is the case in Australia, as it is around the world. Special privileges are guaranteed to only a small section of the population which further fuels social discontent and divisions.

"People should turn to the SEP," Adam said, adding, "Where else can you go? You can't individualise your problems. We don't have a voice now and the media don't present anything truthful about what is happening. This is a job for the SEP."



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