

SEP electoral members denounce Australia's anti-democratic laws: "We need a political voice for the working class"

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party continues to receive support from electoral members who are determined to defeat Australia's new anti-democratic electoral laws that were rushed through the parliament in late August, with Labor Party support.

The comments below—from Debbie, a former Labor Party member, and Billy, a young worker living in state-owned public housing—point to the deep-seated popular disgust with the establishment parties and a recognition that the working class must have its own independent party based on a socialist and internationalist perspective.

In order for the SEP to retain electoral registration, it must submit a list of 1,500 members, treble the previous number, by December 3. To sign-up as an electoral member and join the SEP campaign, click [here](#).

Debbie, an accountant from Sydney, emailed a letter of support to the SEP. She and her husband were previously members of the Australian Labor Party but resigned in disgust over the party's right-wing politics. Debbie was searching for a left-wing alternative to Labor and came across the SEP in April. She has since become an electoral member and is supporting the party's campaign against the new laws.

"The Australian government, and indeed governments in most countries, are allowing and even encouraging the growing gap between rich and poor," she wrote. "This has been increasingly evident since the turn of the century, but particularly noticeable in the last couple of years during the pandemic.

"JobKeeper was necessary to keep small businesses alive, but much of the funding went to big businesses

that increased profits, dividends, and bonuses with no requirement for repayment. When [Prime Minister] Scott Morrison was challenged over this horrendous hand-out to the big end of town, his glib response was that he does not deal in the politics of envy!! A disgusting answer from an uncaring PM.

"Refugee detention is another shameful page in Australia's history. Starting with the Tampa debacle, both main parties have continually abused refugees. These people have suffered greatly and deserve proper and humane treatment.

"We need a political voice for the working class and the disadvantaged. At the moment they are not represented and this is the reason I have joined the Socialist Equality Party. The numerous inequalities that are currently acceptable must be challenged and overturned—the SEP is the future."

Billy Hambides, 30, is a long-standing electoral member and party supporter in Sydney. He explained why workers and young people should join the SEP and spoke about the official health department's response to COVID-19 and in particular, an outbreak of infections in the state housing complex where he lives.

Hambides was told by residents on August 28 that one of his neighbours had contracted COVID-19, but mass testing in the building did not occur until two days later. He subsequently learned that there were at least six more cases. "The obvious problem is there is no official correspondence from housing and NSW Health, so we have to go off rumour," Hambides said.

On September 15, he received a letter from NSW Health, instructing him to monitor for COVID-19. Residents from other parts of the building received different and often contradictory instructions.

“As far as we know there’s positive cases in the building and we have to fend for ourselves,” Hambides said.

“There’s no regular deep cleaning being done in the lifts, the stairwell, the lobby, the laundry room. I know residents have contacted housing to get cleaning done but it hasn’t happened. They say, ‘We’ll look into it.’ Nothing happens, they never do it.

“If you live in state housing and had to deal with it or Centrelink you’ll understand how these systems work and how little they care. People are stressed, anxious, angry, like they have been left by the wayside. When something breaks a lot of people don’t report it because why bother, they aren’t going to fix it anyway. That same attitude is being adopted here.”

The NSW government, Hambides said, is attempting to “create an atmosphere where the onus is not on the state or the government but on individuals. When I read that all of this could have been prevented if they had listened to proper scientific advice, it is infuriating and devastating. They still could do something, it’s not too late to eradicate COVID, but that’s not the policy. It is to live with it. As though people dying every day from something preventable is something that we have to accept.”

Referring to the new electoral legislation, Billy said, “The number of laws and rights—laws that protected human rights—that have been barrelled over in the name of COVID is pretty alarming.

“The new measures force the smaller parties into an impossible kind of situation when we’re in lockdown. It is very hard to reach people, you can’t campaign, do letterboxing and there’s censorship on Facebook and Instagram. This will force the smaller parties to dissolve, which will reinforce the two-party system.

“The fact that 25 percent of voters didn’t vote for Labor or Liberal in the last election is a huge factor in this [government] decision. They need those votes back in the two-party system,” he said.

Asked how people should respond to the new election laws, Hambides said, “The best thing you can do is inform yourself, read the WSWS. It’s the only site that has accurate news that you can rely on. It will lay out the political situation in a way that no other news outlet does. And people should join the SEP, even as a show of support. First and foremost, start reading.”



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