

Socialist Equality Party (Australia) health workers' forum discusses fight for eradication of COVID-19

Our reporters
10 October 2021

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia) held a public forum early this month entitled “Eradicate COVID-19: Health and lives over profits.” Attended by over 70 people, including nurses, doctors and aged care workers from across Australia and internationally, detailed reports to the event provoked animated questions and discussion.

A full video of the forum can be viewed below.

SEP (Australia) National Secretary Cheryl Crisp, who chaired the meeting, began by drawing attention to the October 1 UK School Strike, which had just concluded. The strike, which was initiated by Lisa Diaz, attracted widespread participation and support from parents, educators and students around the world. Diaz, along with all parents across Britain, is being forced by the government to send her unvaccinated children to school, where there are no protections or measures in place to stop the spread of the virus.

Crisp emphasised that any conception Australia was exempt from these experiences has been dispelled by 56,000 people having been infected with the virus in the previous four months.

Julia Thomas, who leads the SEP's work among health workers in Australia, gave the opening report, highlighting the necessity for an eradication strategy to stop the pandemic and save lives. She explained that the social forces blocking this necessary approach are capitalist governments around the world, including in Australia, who have effectively abandoned all measures to contain the pandemic and are normalising mass death in the name of “living with the virus.”

Ebony Eulo, the next speaker, reviewed the situation facing indigenous people in Enngonia, a small, remote town near Burke in north-western New South Wales.

The nearest hospital for treatment for COVID is 436kms away. She learnt from her uncle in Enngonia that when the town was locked down, following the discovery of COVID-19 infections, residents were not being provided with food or medicines. Ebony and her family responded by establishing a GoFundMe page to raise money for food. So far, over \$10,000 has been donated.

The final speaker was Saman Gunadasa, a member of the SEP political committee in Sri Lanka and convenor of the Health Workers Action Committee. He spoke about the growing struggles of Sri Lankan health workers and other sections of the working class during the pandemic, including the recent strike of 90,000 health workers at over 1,000 hospitals. The stoppages were in defiance of the Rajapakse governments' anti-strike laws. In opposition to the ongoing betrayal of workers' struggles by the trade unions, three hospital-based action committees have been established in Sri Lanka, under the political initiative and guidance of the Socialist Equality Party.

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Opening up the meeting for discussion, Cheryl Crisp said that media coverage on recent anti-vaccination rallies in Melbourne had generated discussion about how the coronavirus vaccines had been developed so rapidly. She explained that there has been a great deal of misinformation and confusion created by the media, governments, the unions and extreme right-wing organisations.

Associate Professor John Brannan, a respiratory scientist with a background in drug development, and Gary Alvernia, a junior doctor, were invited to address

the meeting. They provided important information about the development of the COVID vaccines and the need for mandatory vaccination. These contributions provoked further discussion and questions about the vaccinations, vaccine hesitancy and how to take forward a campaign to eradicate the virus.

Crisp concluded the meeting by emphasising that it is only through knowledge—scientific, technological, social and political—that workers can make informed and correct historical decisions and explained the political motivations behind Australia's new anti-democratic electoral laws. These measures, which were rushed through Australia's parliament in August, she said, were aimed at suppressing opposition to the criminal reopening drive by the capitalist class, and had to be resisted by the working class. Crisp urged everyone in attendance to become an electoral member of the Socialist Equality Party, to take up the fight for a socialist perspective.



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