

SEP electoral members oppose the reopening of schools in Australia, warning that it will cause mass infection

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP) electoral members are continuing to mobilise in a campaign to defeat anti-democratic electoral laws which target minor political parties, including the SEP. The legislation threatens deregistration, meaning parties cannot run under their name during elections, unless they submit a list of 1,500 members, treble the previous number, by December 2.

In comments to the WSWs, two electoral members have spoken on the relationship between this fight and a deepening social crisis being inflicted on the working class. They have noted that the legislation is also aimed at suppressing widespread opposition to the “live with the virus” policies of Australian governments, exemplified by mass school reopenings in Sydney and Melbourne, both of which are still in the grips of COVID outbreaks.

As part of this campaign the SEP is holding a public meeting Sunday, October 31 at 1pm (AEDT) entitled: A socialist program to eliminate COVID-19. Become an electoral member of the SEP today. [Click here to register.](#)

To join the SEP campaign against the legislation, sign up as an electoral member today.

Ben, a nineteen-year-old trainee receptionist from the Blue Mountains, just outside Sydney, became an SEP electoral member this year.

“I agree that the new laws are anti-democratic,” he said. “I only know about them from what I have learned from the interviews published by the SEP and by reading the WSWs. The government rushed the legislation through in less than 24 hours. It clearly targets the SEP and I’d much rather side with that party

than the Australian government.”

Referring to the Liberal and Labor parties he said, “Frankly, both are appalling. I don’t agree with most of the decisions either of them makes and even the good ones are, as far as I can tell, publicity stunts.

“I don’t think the Greens are interested in making progressive change, despite what they would like you to believe. They take donations from big companies. I would much rather be supporting a party that supports me instead of big business.

“In my social circles there’s not a whole lot of people that vote. A lot of my peers on social media have very progressive political views and oppose the major parties. They are more left wing than the major parties.

“I’ve noticed that there are a lot more activist style Instagram posts on social media. People do seem to care about inequality and some of the bigger issues that are being created by the major parties. The perception that the three major parties are the only parties worth voting for is declining.”

Ben spoke about his ongoing struggle to find housing: “Housing is an area in which the government is letting the entire population down. I was pretty much homeless for about three months, sleeping on couches. I got lucky when someone in the house I was couch surfing in moved out and I was able to take the room there.

“I was never homeless because I couldn’t afford to pay rent. It wasn’t me; I just wouldn’t get approved for any houses. There is way too much competition. Even before COVID there were more tenants looking for a place than there were houses for them to stay.”

“I live in the Blue Mountains, so now with COVID a lot of people from Sydney who work from home moved up to the mountains. This has driven the prices through

the roof. Now there is nowhere that is both big enough and affordable enough for young people.

The house he was living at was sold, and he and his friends were forced to move out. “We were evicted last Monday. We have access to a small villa through work, but it is not nearly big enough. We have people sleeping in the lounge room as there are not enough bedrooms. It is better than sleeping on the street or finding a place in Lithgow (a town outside the area) and travelling for 2 hours every morning to get to work.

“I’ve been talking to tens of services that are supposed to be able to provide emergency accommodation, transitional housing or any government subsidised accommodation, but there is nothing. The homelessness rate in Australia is the government’s fault. The cost of living has been steadily rising and my income has been declining at the same rate.”

Ben opposed the decision of the NSW government to reopen the schools. “We should not be putting vulnerable children, packed up like sardines, in classrooms. It will spread COVID through the entire school. If one child in a classroom has Delta, so does everyone in the classroom and half the rest of the school when you walk through the corridors. It is the worst place you could possibly reopen. They then take it to their parents and grandparents, who are more susceptible and have a higher likelihood of dying. But the attitude is ‘we’ve got to keep the kids in school.’

“This is definitely not for the health and safety of the school communities. It is to promote the idea that everything is going back to normal, that COVID is something to live and die with. They don’t want you to know that second part, they want you to think that it is completely unavoidable, and nothing can be done. It is appalling and straight up criminal. If I killed as many people as the Australian government, I would be the serial killer with the single highest body count in history.”

Discussing the call of the ICFI for the formation of rank-and-file committees in workplaces and communities, Ben said, “This is the only way to fight it because every other organisation that allegedly exists is for profit. Profits should be illegal. Profits cannot exist without exploitation. They go hand in hand. The working class is the only class that has the incentive to fight that. We are the majority.”

Steve, a teacher from regional NSW, who has been an electoral member since 2020 said, “Obviously, schools are a big concern, especially given the difficulty children have in socially distancing and the difficulties teachers have in policing social distancing, and mask wearing. Inevitably the schools will become a common source of transmission. Older teachers and teachers and students with pre-existing conditions will be most at risk.

“The main-stream media have been using terms like ‘Freedom Day.’ Surely the concept should be tempered with the knowledge that due to the ‘opening up’ more people will die or become very ill.

“The Australian government was lucky as what initially saved Australia was geographic isolation and population density,” he continued. “No doubt if Australia were part of Europe our numbers would be many times higher than they have been. The powers that be emphasised ‘flattening the curve,’ and the prime minister wanted to attend a rugby league match the week before our first lockdown.

“Put simply, they invited the virus in. The quarantine system was not working and yet when the more transmissible Delta strain broke out overseas, no new measures were adopted to prevent it entering our country.”

Speaking on the electoral laws, Steve said, “The newly promulgated 1,500-member rule mandated to political parties is disturbing. How are political parties supposed to get started? It is completely undemocratic. It seems that the major parties will do anything to maintain power, even if in the process they undermine the very nature of democracy.”



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