

Australia's anti-democratic electoral laws “are to maintain the duopoly,” SEP electoral members say

Our reporters
19 November 2021

The Socialist Equality Party's (SEP) campaign to defeat the anti-democratic electoral laws rushed through the Australian parliament on August 26 continues with more interviews from electoral members.

The laws target the SEP, and 35 other political parties, which do not have representatives in federal parliament. It requires that a 1,500-membership list, treble the previous number, be submitted by December 2 or the party faces deregistration. This would mean SEP candidates could not run under the party name during elections.

In today's interviews electoral members draw the connection between the laws and the persecution of Julian Assange. They refer to the devastating impact of the pro-business National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which slashes service provisions for people with a disability.

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

Don, 62, is an electrician for a public utility in regional Western Australia who previously worked as an avionics technician. Having moved to Australia from Texas in 1996, he began by commenting on the American health care system.

“In the US they don't have a health care system, they have a collection of commercial entities that masquerade as a health care system. In New York you could see the results of this COVID-19; there were mass burials.

“I worked for the state government in Texas, and it would only cover 80 percent of your medical bill. If the doctor reduces his bill to 80 percent, they will only pay 80 percent of that. When I left that job, to continue

having medical cover they wanted \$800 per month but on my \$24,000 salary that was impossible to afford.

“There are two reasons I became an electoral member of the SEP,” he continued. “I was looking for something more cerebral and more policy oriented. The other reason, and what sealed it for me, was the government's decision to up the numbers required to be a registered party. These laws are just too undemocratic for me.

“I found the SEP through a post on Facebook about a dispute in the US. It was the mid-western states where the unions were trying to push the SEP out. That's what's already happened here with the unions making concessions that don't look after people's interests but merely maintain the unions' place at the table.

“There was stuff written on that—the Accords—before my time in Australia and it was all about gaining a place at the table in exchange for the real power of being able to strike. In the capitalist system withdrawing your labour is the only power you've got,” Don said.

“The government's new laws are to maintain the duopoly. Labor doesn't have to promise anything, they just wait until everyone gets sick of the Liberals. [Former Labor Party leader] Bill Shorten's concept of protecting Medicare is to protect the parts of Medicare that transfer public money to private diagnostic agencies.

“We now have the NDIS” he said. “The IS stands for Insurance Scheme but it's all about denying claims. It's a trap. I know someone who works in the NDIS and I've met some of their clients. The program is criminal. As Martin Luther King said, all the stuff Hitler did in Germany was legal.”

Referring to the US-led persecution of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange, Don said, “The government does not have the right to spy on us or even think they have the right to retain data. Julian Assange, and to a lesser extent Mr. Snowden, have created an awareness that the commercial media consistently works against us.

“What’s been done to Julian Assange is torture. It’s been documented. It exposes the flaws of the so-called legal system. There’s not much justice in it and half the time it’s not even legal. They don’t even follow their own laws.

“Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld are the true criminals. Why are they not being indicted, and warrants issued for their arrests? It’s the state exercising their monopoly to spy on us, to lie to us. In the US, all the police forces have been militarised. The US has crept into a police state. That’s why they fear Assange. Voltaire said, ‘It’s dangerous to be right in matters about which the established authorities are wrong.’”

Michael, 54, who is a health worker at a disability residential facility, has been an electoral member of the SEP since 2020. “I became an electoral member because I was impressed by the SEP in its fervour and commitment to Julian Assange. I haven’t seen that kind of passion from the major parties of course, and it’s gone quiet from the other parties.

“I have followed the current hearing. There’s something in Julian’s favour: the judge presiding was involved in another ruling on this exact same premise for another person and the person’s extradition to America was stopped on the very same premise.

“There is something there,” Michael continued, “but I’m angry how the media has ignored the way one of Assange’s previous associates, Sigurdur Thordarson, has been proven to have lied in testimony against Assange. His testimony against Assange was a lie, he admitted it, and he himself was a paedophile. It really is nefarious that the US would use his testimony against Assange. It’s been completely hushed up in our media,” he said.

Johnathon is a young student on the Disability Support Pension (DSP) because he has a form of dyslexia. He is currently finishing a bachelor’s degree in biotechnology.

“We get so little money you can hardly live on it,” he

said of the DSP, whose maximum basic rate is currently \$441.10 a week. “This week I had to choose between buying milk or toilet paper to have some basic hygiene. My girlfriend had to buy the toilet paper for me,” he said.

Johnathon is unable to qualify for a driver’s licence because of his dyslexia and despite not having a carer, he has been inexplicably denied taxi vouchers to enable him to travel and purchase groceries and other essentials. “I’ve challenged them on it but sometimes you qualify for taxi vouchers, sometimes you don’t and there is no clarification,” he said.

Australia’s new electoral laws, he said, are “an underhanded attempt to eliminate smaller parties which they see as a threat, while maintaining the illusion of the two-party system. The media has played a role in this because there has been very little publication about it.”

Johnathon also noted the connection between the electoral laws and mass opposition to the war drive against China. “The capitalist class does not care about workers. The purchase of these nuclear-capable submarines under the AUKUS alliance changes everything. It means we will be a nuclear state and in the firing line of China.”



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