

SEP Electoral Members speak out over exploitation and inequality

Our reporters

29 November 2021

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaign continues against anti-democratic electoral laws rushed through the Australian parliament on August 26. The SEP, as well as 35 other political parties, has to submit a list of 1,500 electoral members, treble the previous number, by December 2 or face deregistration.

If the SEP is deregistered its candidate will not have the party's name on election ballots, making it much harder for voters to be able to identify the party they want to vote for. The purpose of the laws is to prevent the opposition to the major parties finding a left-wing and socialist expression.

To join the SEP campaign against Australia's anti-democratic election laws, sign-up as an electoral member today.

The SEP spoke to Sally-Ann, 54, a former aged care worker who became an electoral member last year.

"People should join the SEP because social equality is fair and for everybody. Workers should join to fight exploitation. Look at the wages in aged care. I was earning \$23 an hour at the nursing home and couldn't live on that. While my executive manager was on at least \$140,000 a year, I was on \$32,000. It's disgusting and the carers only get \$1 more than cleaners.

"The new electoral laws are designed to make it harder for smaller parties because they don't want a socialist perspective around. They are doing it because they are afraid. They are starting to put socialists down because they know we're getting stronger. A lot of people are thinking about socialist policies. I look on social media and there's more people turning more towards socialism," she said.

Sally-Ann first heard about the SEP through a relative and joined after working closely with the party during a difficult work compensation claim.

"In aged care there is so much bullying from the management. It's almost encouraged. I worked at a nursing home for eight years and it was always short staffed. I worked in cleaning, the laundry and the dining room," she explained.

Although Sally-Ann was a cleaner, she still had to help the residents with caring duties but could not assist with personal care tasks because she was not qualified. "It was really confusing. They would train us, and then contradict themselves. On the floor we'd report to the clinical nurse. However, they'd cut corners," she said.

Recalling her work injury she said, "We had a mop bucket on our trolley. They asked us to take the trolley plus push an extra bucket of water. I said it was too dangerous. My supervisor got HR to put a note on my trolley instructing me that was the way I had to work. I was shuffling the two mop buckets and smashed my ulna on the door frame.

"I kept on working, but by the end of the week, I couldn't lift my arm. It turned out I'd fractured a bone, chipped a bit of my elbow and hurt the tendon and had to have an operation," she said and explained myriad difficulties she encountered trying to get compensation.

"The workers' compensation system is an absolute nightmare, and I can understand people suiciding from it. You get sent to the insurance doctors and they just lie. They don't write everything down that you say and they change things around. The insurance company wouldn't listen to my doctors, they'd go by the reports from the insurance doctors. It is all money for them. This is used against the working class," she explained.

Sally-Ann lodged a claim with WorkCover. "It claimed to have not received the paperwork, even though I sent it by registered post. When this happened, I knew I needed a lawyer. Anybody involved in workers' compensation should get a lawyer straight

away. WorkCover don't represent you, they represent management, the company," she said.

"The WorkCover specialist said to me that he didn't believe I did it at work. Even though he knew I had chipped a bone, he didn't tell my doctor, or my lawyer. It is absolutely loaded against you. Even the rehabilitation officers worked against me. My bosses didn't want me back in the facility because I was a liability."

"I saw the complete other side of the aged care system. There have been 18 different inquiries into aged care and absolutely nothing has changed," she said.

James, a 62-year-old carpenter, has been an electoral member since 2016. He began by commenting on government responses to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Government decisions today are based solely on the interests of business. It's so obvious that the emergence of the omicron variant would occur, the writing's been on the wall. The system basically allows for the rich countries to hoard vaccines while the third world suffers.

"The virus is saying, 'If you allow me to breed into the third world, I'll come back to bite you.' We're in a position where we must help the third world, but only the working class can do this," he said.

Referring to Australia's anti-democratic laws, James said: "The electoral commission is supposed to be independent of government, but it's not. New laws are being introduced requiring you to show your ID, this will stop a lot from voting.

"The biggest fear of the ruling class is that it will lose control of the system. The situation is becoming as it is in Europe, really fractured without the traditional parties dominating the scene anymore."

James also raised concerns about the Australian government's unwavering support for the US-led preparations for war against China.

"The government is a disgrace with foreign policy. It's using China for political gains and distraction and I'm worried America will do something really stupid. We have already seen Trump's actions; ripping up the nuclear agreement with Iran and the assassination of their general [Qasem Soleimani]," he said.

"The unions sold out a long time ago," he continued, "I used to be in the BLF [Builders Labourers Federation] in the late 70s and they are now really

corrupt. I saw the Teachers Federation was planning a stoppage on the December 7, it got me thinking when was the last mass strike by workers? Workers don't realise the power they have, but you just need to look at history. I think mass struggles are inevitable," he added.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact