

“The laws are ultimately censorship”—SEP electoral members support campaign against Australia’s anti-democratic legislation

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) is fighting anti-democratic electoral laws designed to silence political parties that don’t have seats in government. It targets the SEP, along with 35 other parties, requiring a list of 1,500 members, treble the previous number, to be submitted by December 2 to avoid deregistration.

Labor marched in lockstep with the Coalition to pass the legislation behind the backs of the population, joined by the corporate media that has maintained a virtual wall of silence. The SEP alone continues to wage a more than three-month long campaign to defeat these laws and demand the repeal of all restrictions on the democratic rights of parties and individuals to run in elections.

SEP electoral members continue to voice their support, denouncing the electoral laws and drawing a connection between their passage and the deteriorating living conditions facing the working class and youth in Australia.

Support the SEP’s campaign against the legislation and sign up as an electoral member today.

Maya, 53, works as a scientific animator and researcher at a cancer hospital. She is a longstanding electoral member of the Socialist Equality Party. “The electoral laws have been brought about to reduce competition. People are heading towards the independents in droves as Liberal and Labor are not answering any of their needs or demands. The laws are ultimately censorship.”

On the COVID-19 pandemic she said, “Hospitals have not been properly prepared, no adequate PPE, no adequate worker relief. People are working incredibly long hours, without stress leave, without mental health leave.

“The fact is the government does not care about the health and wellbeing of the population; they just want to keep the economy ‘healthy’. The elderly are treated

abominably. They have been neglected in nursing homes with staff that don’t have PPE, haven’t gotten their vaccinations. They were all just left to die. These are people who have worked all their lives, paid taxes, contributed to society, gone to war etc, but they are now no longer economically viable, so they are treated as expendable,” she said.

“Most scientists fund their research with grants from the government. The money comes from an ever-decreasing pool, which makes it incredibly competitive. The success rate for funding is about 3 to 10 percent, this means a lot goes unfunded and people end up rethinking their careers.

“The provision of money is short-term as well, anywhere between 1 to 3 years. This means you must constantly be getting grant money. The researchers and assistants are all on contracts as virtually everyone employed in a scientific area is tied to grant funding, very few are in a tenured position.

“It doesn’t foster an environment where people can properly think. It is competitive and fraught with stress. In Australia, curiosity knowledge-driven research is minimal. That is research without an end point in mind, not dictated by profit or an end goal. Competition drives research in a very specific direction, where it must produce a benefit in a medical situation.

“For example, in cancer research it is about discovering mechanisms that cause cancer and then conducting drug studies that can impact those mechanisms. However, some of the big discoveries are made in curiosity research. That has been left to the wayside because it’s not immediately relevant for businesses,” Maya said

Maya’s work is entirely funded through the charitable arm of the hospital. “The government can’t provide the money for what we do, we have to go out there and secure it ourselves,” she stated.

“I’ve been in this industry since 2013 and on a yearly contract at this hospital for four years. If my contract is not renewed, I’ll have to go interstate or overseas just to find work. Working on contract makes your life tenuous. I can’t consider taking on a mortgage because when the contract ends for my job, I will be stuck in a situation where I will not be able to pay for it.

“PhD students typically have their degree span anywhere from three to four years. They rely on scholarships, which gives them the most minimal wage. It’s incredibly hard work for a small amount of money. Particularly when COVID hit, you couldn’t get into the laboratory to do your work. International students had their scholarships cancelled and were unable to do any paid work. They were stuck here, the government refused to provide for them. They had no money, and many had to have food trucks deliver basic supplies to them,” she said.

Tim, 68, is a retired teacher. He became an electoral member this year. “I noticed via a Facebook post from a friend that the SEP was highlighting the changes to electoral laws made by the government and felt I needed to stand up against them. It seems incongruous to me that they are changing laws to reduce the alternatives for people to express their political beliefs, at a time when more and more people have become disenchanted with the two-party system,” he said.

“It just reminds me that they are not interested in people, but simply in power. My beliefs are reflected in what I see in the SEP. Everyone should be treated fairly, regardless of their culture, gender, sexual identity or anything else. That means having health care for all and providing opportunities for well-paid work and a place to live. I am sick of the political wasteland where lies and abuse have become the norm,” he added.



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