

Socialist Equality Party to continue campaign against Australia's anti-democratic electoral laws

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
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Amid an intensifying public health and political crisis in Australia and internationally triggered by the COVID-19 disaster, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) will extend its campaign against the anti-democratic laws rammed through parliament in August by the Labor Party and the Liberal-National Coalition government.

The SEP has not met the arbitrary requirement of submitting the details of 1,500 members within the deadline of December 2 set by the two big business parties—in the middle of the worst upsurge of Delta infection that made physical political campaigns unsafe, and often unlawful.

But already we have won significant numbers of new electoral members, and this is an important achievement. Our electoral members have not just signed a form. They have consciously supported the SEP's fight for a socialist program, in opposition to Labor, the unions and the Greens, and many have convinced co-workers, friends and family members to do the same.

They have joined in response to the statement on the SEP's sign-up form, which explains: "The opposition to the dictates of big business and its political servants needs to be guided by a socialist program that puts the social needs of working people—above all their health and lives—ahead of the private profits of the wealthy few. The SEP alone fights for this perspective."

We will continue this campaign until and beyond the looming federal election. Whether we are registered or not, the SEP will stand candidates in this election. We will take out to the broadest possible audience the fight for the overturn of the entire capitalist economic and political order and for the building of the revolutionary socialist leadership needed to win that fight.

The electoral laws seek to strip party registration from all political parties, including the SEP, that do not currently have parliamentary representation, by suddenly trebling the number of members required from 500 to 1,500 to be officially recognised.

The SEP has always opposed these laws, which give the state apparatus the power to decide which parties have support in the population. Under protest, however, we have submitted the names of 500 electoral members in time for each election in order to exercise our right to stand candidates under our party name.

When we launched our campaign against the new laws on September 2, we explained that they were a desperate attempt to prop up the increasingly discredited two-party duopoly and stifle the rising discontent in the working class. We said:

"The COVID-19 pandemic has only deepened the opposition and anger in the working class to the two parties of big business—the Coalition and Labor—that have put profit ahead of health and lives. The concern in ruling circles is that this hostility will be expressed in the next election in votes for other political parties, further destabilising the two-party system of rule on which the capitalist class has long depended."

That analysis has been completely confirmed over the past three months. By the time the parliamentary year ended, the hated Coalition government, wracked by rifts and revolts, had virtually disintegrated, unable to pass any legislation without Labor's help.

Yet Labor's support is still languishing at the historic 85-year low of around 33 percent it registered at the last election in 2019, producing a deep crisis of the entire political establishment and the prospect of another "hung" parliament and unstable minority government.

Many workers recall Labor governments' decades-long record of enforcing the big business assault on working-class conditions, working hand-in-glove with the unions. This disaffection has been compounded by Labor forming a de facto "National Cabinet" coalition with the Morrison government to police the "live with the virus" dictates of the corporate elite, and Labor's explicit pro-business shift under party leader Anthony Albanese.

Aided by the role of Labor and the unions in trying to suppress working class resistance to the “reopening” of the economy for the sake of profit, the corporate media has increasingly promoted far-right anti-lockdown elements. This fascistic threat can be combated only through the mobilisation of the great strength of the working class.

At the same time, the pandemic has become a bonanza for the wealthy. All the federal, state and territory governments, Labor and Coalition alike, have poured hundreds of billions of dollars into the pockets of the corporate rich via “support packages,” while assisting the employers to accelerate their decades-long offensive against the jobs, wages and conditions of the working-class.

This is already triggering a resurgence of the class struggle, reflected in the strikes erupting among teachers and transport workers, despite the efforts of the trade unions to keep suppressing all opposition.

As the political crisis has intensified, the Morrison government has stepped up its commitment to what would be a catastrophic US-led war against China by signing the AUKUS treaty, fully backed by Labor.

Furthermore, both the Coalition and Labor have produced blatantly inadequate emissions-reduction “plans” and the threat of disastrous climate change has risen through the abject failure of the national-based ruling elites to agree on any meaningful responses at the latest 26th COP gathering, staged in Glasgow.

The real fear haunting the political establishment is that, particularly under conditions of the emerging struggles of the working class, the rising discontent will turn markedly to the left toward a socialist alternative. The anti-democratic electoral laws are particularly directed against the SEP, the only party advancing that alternative.

Our campaign has been a powerful one. So far, the SEP has held two public meetings and eight weekly electoral members’ meetings to explain and discuss the crucial issues at stake. We have published five party statements, 23 comments or articles, and 89 text or video interviews with electoral members explaining why they have signed up.

We have posted 20 videos, marking a further development of the SEP’s social media reach, and two radio interviews. We received powerful statements of support from rank-and-file teachers’, postal workers’ and health workers’ committees in Australia and Sri Lanka. This material can be viewed on the *World Socialist Web Site*.

This campaign is deepening the SEP’s influence in the working class, meeting up with the new level of workers’ struggles. It is advancing the fight for the establishment of rank-and-file committees, completely independent of all the pro-business trade unions and linked to the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees.

The SEP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement, have been also in the forefront of exposing the criminal response of governments to the pandemic. This will be taken forward by the Global Workers’ Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic, which will involve workers in every industry bringing forward their experiences during this worsening disaster.

We therefore reiterate our call, made on September 2, for “a concerted campaign to demand the repeal of these laws and all restrictions on the democratic right of parties and individuals to stand in elections.”

We urge all our readers and supporters in Australia to join up as electoral members of the SEP to help us retain our party registration and take forward the fight for socialism on the widest possible basis, including in elections.

The defence of democratic rights is incompatible with a society dominated by a super-rich corporate oligarchy. It requires a revolutionary socialist perspective, aimed at totally reorganising society and establishing workers’ governments to fight for a global society based on social equality.

For that struggle, the working class needs a new political leadership, based on the lessons of the strategic experiences of the international working class over the past two centuries. That historical level of understanding, which is required for full membership of the SEP, is set out and explained in the SEP’s *Statement of Principles*. We urge all our electoral members to study this document and consider applying for full membership of the SEP to help build a mass revolutionary party.



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