

Strong response to SEP final election campaign meeting in Australia

Our reporter
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) stepped up its federal election campaign with a well-attended online public meeting last Sunday, six days before the May 21 national ballot. The live-streamed event can be viewed below, with speakers presented in designated chapters with accompanying graphs and photographs.

SEP National Secretary Cheryl Crisp chaired the meeting with reports delivered by Oscar Grenfell, Mike Head and Peter Byrne, who are contesting Senate seats in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria respectively. Max Boddy, John Davis and Jason Wardle, the party's other Senate candidates in Australia's east coast states, answered questions during the meeting's lively Q&A session.

Crisp set the meeting in a broader and higher historical and global context by referring to the recent imaging of Sagittarius A*, the supermassive black hole at the centre of our Milky Way galaxy. This monumental scientific breakthrough was the result of coordinated work by hundreds of astronomers, engineers and support staff from 60 institutions across 20 countries.

This was an extraordinary example of "what international collaboration of human labour, science and technology can achieve," Crisp said. She contrasted it to the reactionary nationalist response of capitalist governments around the world to COVID-19. The catastrophic death toll from the pandemic, and the rising danger of a third world war, along with worsening global poverty and other social ills, she said, were products of the nation-based capitalist profit system.

"If the approach which guided the study of Sagittarius A* was adopted to all aspects of society—conscious, scientific planning, international collaboration, the necessary resources allocated—the

world would be a very different place. But that would require the reorganisation of society as a whole and the reallocation of society's wealth from the tiny wealthy few to the mass of the world's population."

This historic mission, Crisp continued, could not be achieved by futile appeals to governments, capitalist parties or trade unions but by the international working class, united with science, in the struggle to overthrow capitalism.

Oscar Grenfell told the meeting that the federal election had sharply revealed the degenerated character of the political establishment and the rising mass disaffection and anger of millions of people. These processes, he continued, were being intensified by COVID-19, the US-led proxy war in Ukraine against Russia, and unrelenting government and big business attacks on the working class in every country.

The election campaigns of the parliamentary parties and associated media coverage, he said, involved a "conspiracy of silence" to suppress any discussion of these crucial questions. This was prepared by last year's bipartisan anti-democratic electoral laws to deregister the SEP and other parties without parliamentary seats, in the leadup to the election.

"The coming together of Labor and the Coalition to pass these laws summed up the real political situation. Behind the insults and theatrics between Albanese and Morrison, Labor and the Liberals agree on all the substantive questions," he said.

"Irrespective of which party forms government," Grenfell warned, "its program will be massive spending cuts, aimed at forcing the working class to pay for the billions of dollars given to the corporations during the pandemic and to fuel the war drive."

Mike Head pointed out that the SEP was the only party in the election opposing the reckless US-led war

drive, now directed against both Russia and China. He reviewed the historical and economic roots of the Ukraine conflict and its catastrophic trajectory.

“The aim of the US-NATO operation is not only gaining access to the vast resources of Russia—oil, gas, countless strategic minerals. Washington views the defeat of Moscow as a decisive step toward a military confrontation with China to establish US domination over the entire Eurasian landmass,” he said.

“Our election campaign is part of the fight by our world party, the International Committee of the Fourth International, to clarify the immense dangers and mobilise the working class in a global anti-war movement and for socialist internationalism. This is the only way to end the threat of a catastrophic third world war.”

Peter Byrne’s report, which focused on the emerging struggles of the working class in Australia and internationally, used a segment of Eric London’s video presentation to the recent May Day 2022 online event to illustrate this new global reality.

The speaker drew attention to the collapse of the Sri Lankan economy and the eruption of nationwide demonstrations and two general strikes against soaring food and fuel prices and demanding the resignation of President Rajapakse and his entire government.

The speaker pointed to rising inflation in Australia and the escalating attacks on workers’ jobs, wages and social conditions. He referred to the SEP’s intervention into strike action by the Dyson bus drivers in Melbourne and reviewed the key demands outlined in the socialist action program for the working class set out in the SEP’s election statement.

Byrne said the SEP was not oriented to the rotten parliamentary set-up but to the emerging struggles of the working class, as seen in recent strikes by nurses, aged care and other health workers, teachers, bus drivers and others. He stressed that these struggles could be taken forward only through the establishment of workplace rank-and-file committees, independent of the trade unions, which had strangled workers’ struggles for decades.

Byrne pointed to the vital work being conducted by the Committee for Public Education, the Australia Post rank-and-file committee and the health workers’ rank-and-file group, which were initiated by the SEP. “This is just the beginning of what workers need to do to

advance their interests on the basis of a socialist program of action,” Byrne said.

The SEP meeting stood in sharp contrast to the highly-orchestrated election meetings held by the Liberal-National Coalition, Labor and the Greens. These are anti-democratic events, with no questions or discussion allowed.

SEP election meetings encourage maximum participation and discussion about the party’s policies. Engaged audience members at Sunday’s meeting peppered SEP candidates for more details on the party’s program and analysis during the extended Q&A session, which is included in the video broadcast.

Questions were asked, and fully answered, about the NATO-led war against Russia in Ukraine, how to get accurate COVID-19 infection figures, Australia’s anti-democratic preferential voting system, the role of identity politics, the policies of the “teal independent” candidates, socialism and small business, the nature of parliament, political corruption and many other issues.

Almost \$5,000 was donated to the SEP’s special election fund, a generous measure of the enthusiastic response to the meeting and the party’s campaign. Speakers urged all participants to join the SEP to help build the revolutionary socialist working-class leadership needed in Australia and internationally.

Please share the election meeting video widely on social media and get in touch with the SEP to join the party or assist in the final days of the election campaign.

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