

Vote 1 for Socialist Equality Party candidates in the Australian election!

A socialist program for the working class to fight against war, COVID-19 and austerity

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)**20 May 2022**

The Socialist Equality Party calls on all workers and young people to vote for our candidates for the 2022 election to demonstrate their support for the socialist program the SEP is advancing to fight the escalating assault on their basic social and democratic rights.

The SEP is the only party addressing, let alone providing answers for, the burning issues confronting the working class in Australia and globally: the intensifying danger of a catastrophic world war, the unchecked spread of COVID-19, the relentless slashing of real wages and social services, soaring social inequality and poverty, and the disasters generated by planetary climate change.

As soon as the election is over, these conditions will worsen, regardless of whether the Coalition or Labor forms the next government, and whether or not they even have a majority in parliament.

Far from the lying claims of a “better future” being repeated endlessly by Prime Minister Scott Morrison and opposition Labor leader Anthony Albanese, the situation in Australia, as everywhere, is dominated by a US-led war drive, a spiraling cost of living crisis and a looming world recession.

The SEP is standing Senate teams in three states in order to present a genuine socialist alternative to the broadest possible audience, and prepare for the convulsive working-class struggles ahead, which have begun to erupt among health and aged care workers, teachers, university staff, rail workers, bus drivers and many others.

These strikes are part of a developing international movement that has already seen strikes and mass protests in Sri Lanka and many other countries against surging prices for food and fuel and acute shortages.

How to vote for the SEP candidates

The SEP is contesting the election despite being deregistered as a party by the anti-democratic electoral laws jointly rammed through parliament by the Coalition and Labor last year, in the middle of the pandemic, to try to stifle dissent.

We have been denied the basic right to have our party name on ballot papers, but we are standing Max Boddy and Oscar Grenfell (Group F) in New South Wales, Peter Byrne and Jason Wardle (Group Y) in Victoria and Mike Head and John Davis (Group I) in Queensland.

To cast a valid vote above the line you must fill in six squares, from 1 to 6. To vote for our candidates place number 1 in the relevant group square for your state. Then you must fill in at least five other squares across the

top for your vote to count.

While calling for this vote, we say clearly and unequivocally: None of the issues confronting workers can be resolved through parliament. No matter who forms government after Saturday, it will be an unstable administration without any popular support as it unleashes severe austerity measures, combined with massive military spending to prepare for a US-led war against China, Australian capitalism’s biggest export market.

A warning of what is to come

The SEP’s election statement warned: “Whatever the shape of the next government—Coalition, Labor or a minority government backed by various independents—it will make the working class pay for the huge budget deficits and spiraling government debt created by pouring billions into military spending and big-business pandemic support packages.”

That warning has been borne out throughout the election campaign, despite all the mud-slinging, petty point-scoring and phony promises seeking to divert attention from the real issues.

Even before polling day, the Coalition and Labor are both unveiling the first installments of their plans to slash public spending—the “budget repair” demanded by the financial markets—while promising to deliver huge income tax cuts to the wealthiest layers of society. Labor leader Albanese quickly backtracked on even suggesting an increase in the minimum wage to match the official inflation rate, agreeing with Morrison that any rise must be left up to the pro-business Fair Work Commission.

In another indicator of what is to come, Albanese has said that if he is prime minister, his first duty will be to fly to Tokyo on Tuesday to meet US President Biden and join what will be, in effect, a war council meeting of the anti-China Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: the US, Japan, India and Australia.

Biden is ramping up the confrontation with China, even as his Democrat administration aggressively pours billions of dollars in military hardware into Ukraine for a proxy war to militarily weaken, defeat and fragment Russia and assert US hegemony over the Eurasian landmass.

The SEP is the only party standing in this election opposing the US-led war drive. American imperialism has goaded the Russian capitalist regime of Vladimir Putin into a reactionary invasion of Ukraine that only serves to divide the Ukrainian and Russian working class. As demonstrated by the relentless expansion of NATO to Russia’s borders, now into Finland and Sweden, Ukraine is a pawn in this conflict, which threatens to spark a

nuclear world war.

A political crisis

Media polls have shown falling support for both Labor and the Coalition throughout the election campaign. That is because this has been the most right-wing campaign in recent history, with both ruling parties vying for the backing of big business and Washington to prepare for war and deepen the offensive against workers that successive governments have waged for the past four decades.

The latest Roy Morgan poll shows Labor's primary vote down by 1.5 points to 34 percent last week, now level with the Coalition on 34 percent. If these figures are reproduced at the election, this will be the first time since 1906 that both major parties have received less than 40 percent of the vote at a federal election.

In other words, this is an historic political crisis. Support for the two parties on which capitalist rule has depended for more than a century is imploding.

Significantly, support for the most promoted far-right parties has stalled. Pauline Hanson's anti-immigrant One Nation and billionaire Clive Palmer's United Australia Party registered 5 percent between them.

This indicates that many people are looking for a progressive alternative, but that is being provided only by the SEP. The Greens, like the "teal" independents bankrolled by entrepreneur Simon Holmes à Court, pretend that the climate crisis can be solved by the same capitalist profit system that produced it. They are begging to form a coalition government with Labor, as they did de facto with the minority Gillard Labor government.

Two pseudo-left groups on the ballot—Socialist Alliance and the Victorian Socialists—have nothing whatever to do with socialism. They seek to channel the anti-capitalist sentiment of workers and young people back behind the very parties and organisations responsible for the crisis—Labor, the Greens and the trade unions. They have lined up behind US militarism in Ukraine. They represent the interests of an upper middle-class layer steeped in the divisive and regressive politics of identity based on race and ethnicity, sexuality and gender.

The social crisis

Beneath the conspiracy of silence over the bipartisan profit-driven "live with the virus" policy, Australia's COVID-19 infection rate is now one of the highest in the world. Deaths are climbing far faster than in the first two years of the pandemic. Hospitals, aged care homes and schools are in crisis as a result, on top of decades of under-funding and short-staffing.

Housing, like food and fuel, is increasingly unaffordable. Mortgage stress was already high in working-class areas before the Reserve Bank and the big banks began hiking interest rates. Rents and homelessness are rapidly rising. Media reports have shown women living in cars.

No one can believe the official unemployment rate of around 4 percent. In fact, Roy Morgan surveys report that the rate rose from 7.8 percent in March to 9.7 percent in April. Another 8.4 percent were underemployed, making a total of 2.64 million workers unemployed or underemployed.

The only jobs "created" have been low-wage, insecure and with poor conditions, especially for young workers in the so-called gig economy. Real wages are falling fast—down by 2.7 percent last year even according to the official inflation rate, which vastly underestimates the real cost of

living.

The trade unions are desperately trying to prevent working-class opposition from erupting out of their control—isolating and betraying strike after strike. If a Labor government is formed, they will seek to systematically suppress the working class, as they did under Hawke and Keating, through another Accord-style partnership with the employers.

These corporatist unions no longer defend even the most elementary needs of workers but function as the industrial police for governments and corporations. They enforce the draconian Fair Work legislation put in place by the last Labor government, with their support, to stand over and menace workers.

What the SEP proposes

The SEP's campaign is above all aimed at providing workers with the political and organisational means to fight for their interests. The SEP has initiated rank-and-file committees among teachers, university staff, postal workers and health workers, independent of the unions, to start to provide the basis to fight the onslaught on jobs, wages and social and working conditions.

We encourage working people to form independent, democratically-elected rank-and-file committees in every factory and workplace and working-class suburb as the means to break out of the shackles of the unions and advance their class demands.

Our campaign has advanced key demands around which the working class can fight for its pressing needs. They include:

- An immediate rise in all pay to compensate for past erosion. Index all wages to the real cost of living.
- A full-time, permanent job on decent wages and conditions for all who want one. Proper wages and conditions for all part-time and casual workers, including those in the "gig economy."
- A living wage for all those unable to work, not poverty-level payments, including for the elderly, disabled and unemployed.
- Mandatory public health measures in every workplace to help stamp out COVID, including free N95 masks and PCR tests. Workers not management must decide what is safe. Reinstitute contact tracing, isolation and lockdowns of areas of high infection.
- Tens of billions must be allocated to upgrade and staff schools and hospitals and build new ones to provide free, high quality health care and education to all.

• A vast expansion of public housing to end homelessness as part of a broader program to provide affordable housing for all.

• Free Julian Assange, persecuted for exposing the war crimes and diplomatic intrigues perpetrated by the US and its allies.

As we said in our election statement: "A hue and cry will immediately go out from the financial press, corporate CEOs and their political servants: This is unaffordable. But the working class, the source of all wealth in society, must decide what is affordable and what is not."

This points to what is necessary: Nationalise the banks, finance houses and major corporations under the democratic control of the working class. Seize the colossal wealth of the billionaires. Place production and distribution under democratic workers' control. Halt the squandering of billions on the military and weapons of war.

These demands unavoidably raise the need for the working people to take control of society. A workers' government resting on rank-and-file committees and other organisations created by the working class in its struggles has to be established to reorganise society along socialist lines as part of the fight for socialism internationally.

As the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth

International, the world party of socialist revolution established by Leon Trotsky, we urge workers and youth to not just vote for our candidates but to join the SEP to fight to build a new revolutionary socialist leadership throughout the working class in Australia and internationally.

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