

Australia's crisis election: The way forward for the working class

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)

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The May 21 election revealed an historic crisis of Australia's two-party set up. The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) will be discussing the election outcome and the way forward for the working class at an online public meeting Sunday, June 12 at 2 p.m. (AEST). Register now to attend this important meeting.

The 2022 election produced the lowest combined vote in history for the Labor Party and the Liberal-National Coalition, at around 68.5 percent of primary votes. This compares to around 74 percent in the 2019 election, 81 percent in 2010 and 96 percent in 1949. Labor has been installed in office despite its vote falling to a new record low of less than 33 percent.

Millions of workers and young people expressed their hostility to capitalist rule. An unprecedented number of ballots, almost a third, were cast for independent and "minor" party candidates. This reflects, in distorted electoral terms, a political radicalisation that is already beginning to find expression in the development of working-class struggles.

The vote has profound domestic and international significance. It blows apart the false political nostrums of Australian exceptionalism—of a stable island continent, removed from the political turmoil of Europe or Asia.

The working class is passing through immense social experiences that are connected to international developments and that directly parallel the plight of workers all over the globe.

The SEP was the only party in the election that warned that whatever the shape of the next government—Coalition, Labor or a minority government—it would escalate the agenda of war and austerity to force the working class to pay for the massive budget deficit created by pouring billions into military spending and handouts for big business

throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

This analysis has been vindicated immediately since polling day. With the votes still being counted and no guarantee Labor could form a majority government, the corporate media announced Labor leader Anthony Albanese as the next prime minister.

Just three hours after being sworn in, Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong boarded a plane to Tokyo for a meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a US-led alliance directed at militarily and economically preventing China from challenging US global hegemony.

In his very first press conference, before the rushed trip, Albanese said the Quad meeting was needed to "send a message to the world." Above all, the new government was committed to "the relationship with the United States" as "our most important."

In Tokyo when US President Joe Biden declared he was willing to go to war with China over Taiwan, Albanese pledge Labor's commitment to US provocations and threats in the Indo-Pacific region. Albanese is making clear Labor is the party of war.

On the social front, Treasurer Jim Chalmers has announced that the government faces "dire" economic challenges and "sacrifices" must be made. It will convene a summit with big business and the trade unions within months to plan stepped-up pro-business restructuring directed against workers' jobs, wages and conditions.

The drive to war abroad will be accompanied by a war at home on the conditions of workers. This will produce mass social opposition, which has already been foreshadowed with strike action throughout the election, including from health workers, teachers, bus drivers and aged care workers.

This emerging movement requires a new leadership

in the working class. This was central to the SEP election campaign. We told workers the truth, that the result from May 21 would resolve nothing. What is required is a socialist perspective.

At the meeting, leading members of the SEP will speak on the global context within which the election crisis occurred and outline the party's socialist and internationalist program. Ample time will be provided for questions and discussion. Register today!



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