

SEP (Australia) candidates hold speak out in southwest Sydney ahead of NSW election

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party held a speak out in Liverpool, southwest Sydney, on Saturday as part of their campaign for the New South Wales (NSW) election.

SEP candidates Oscar Grenfell and Max Boddy, along with other party members, spoke to people in the working-class suburb about the need for a socialist alternative to the program of war and austerity put forward by all other parties in the election.

Grenfell, a WSWS writer and the SEP's lead candidate for the Senate in NSW, said that the party's campaign was aimed at "taking forward the fight against austerity and war." He said that the election would resolve nothing for the working class. All of the other parties, including Labor, the Liberal-National Coalition and the Greens were "pro-war parties of the banks and big business."

Grenfell stated that the SEP campaign was the only one centrally raising the question of war. "Today, February 25 marks a significant anniversary," he stated. It was one year of the war in Ukraine, which was not a regional conflict, but a developing global conflagration pitting the US and NATO against Russia and Ukraine. Grenfell stressed the urgency of building an international anti-war movement of the working class, based on a socialist program.

Boddy, the SEP's Assistant National Secretary and its candidate for the seat of Bankstown, in working-class southwest Sydney, linked the issue of war with the social crisis facing the working class. The prices of all basic commodities, including food, were soaring. Mortgages were rapidly rising, but real wages were stagnating. It was the working class, Boddy warned, that would be forced to pay for war as well as the deepening crisis of global capitalism.

Meanwhile, Boddy stated, the ruling elite were

"making money hand over fist. Nobody voted for this state of affairs. But the only way out of this situation is for the working class to unite in a genuine opposition to the very capitalist system that has created these intolerable conditions." The SEP was advancing a socialist program along these lines, including for the expropriation of the banks and the corporations, and for billions to be allocated to education, healthcare and social services, not to war and big business profits.

The SEP's call for an international anti-war movement of the working class won a strong response among workers and young people, many of whom had personal or family experience of the devastating consequences of imperialist war.

The population of the Liverpool electorate is extremely diverse. Just 45 percent were born in Australia, compared to 65 percent in NSW as a whole, and only 14 percent of residents are descended from two Australian-born parents. More than 8 percent of the population were born in Iraq, compared to 0.7 percent statewide.

The region contains areas of serious economic oppression. At the time of the 2021 Census, median weekly household income in the electorate was \$1,459, 30 percent lower than the figure for Greater Sydney. The official unemployment rate, which vastly understates the reality, was 8.6 percent, 75 percent higher than for all of NSW.

Workers and young people spoke to *World Socialist Web Site* reporters about their concerns over the growing threat of world war, the rapidly rising cost of living and the slashing of essential services such as health and education.

Eddy, a 21-year-old apprentice electrician, said the US was "using Ukraine as a puppet, just to get to

Russia and China, to steal their resources.”

He drew a parallel with the devastating effects of the US imperialist war in Iraq: “You can see today in Iraq, there’s no water, no electricity, no clean food, no anything. You can clearly see that, in every country where America intervenes, everything goes downhill. It was a war for the oil, the money, the gold.

“It was based on lies, the ‘weapons of mass destruction’ that were never found in Iraq. I believe that Julian Assange should be free. I believe what he’s doing is the right thing, to expose the truth behind the invasion of Iraq, my home country, and all the other attacks on the Middle East.

Eddy also referred to the immense cost of war to the working class at home: “With the money going to war, use it for something else—young people, homelessness—use it for something good that can help society.”

Baraa, a 16-year-old high school student, said, “I think it’s scary because we don’t get a say in it and we’re the people that are going to war in the future. We’re going to get our lives ruined, rather than the people who are sending us there.

Asked why governments do nothing to stop wars, Baraa said, “It’s about the power, them being in control. Wars keep them in power and the poor divided. They want us to turn against a common enemy, while they just laugh and stay in their mansions.”

Elizabeth, a public sector worker, said it was important for workers to oppose the war in Ukraine because, “We are worried that this can escalate into a third world war. More and more countries are getting pulled into this drama. It concerns the whole world.”

Gabriel, a tiler, added, “Innocent people are getting killed every day.”

Elizabeth continued, “On top of everything, the pandemic, war, the world is in such a state of despair. Look at the mess that we are leaving to the younger generation.

“This climate creates the environment for a revolution. Eventually, people are going to have to react. When nothing gets done, when you can’t get anywhere and you hit a brick wall, what’s going to happen? That’s why revolutions have happened in history and that’s sometimes the only way that can bring a change.”

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