

SEP (Australia) campaigners for NSW election speak to Central Coast workers about cost of living crisis and war

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party held a speak-out on Saturday at The Entrance, on the New South Wales (NSW) Central Coast, north of Sydney, as part of its campaign for the March 25 state election.

Oscar Grenfell, the SEP's lead candidate for the NSW Legislative Council, spoke to workers about the escalating threat of war, the deepening social crisis and the need for a socialist alternative to the program of militarism and austerity advanced by all other parties in the election.

Grenfell pointed to the warmongering anti-China "Red alert" series published in the Nine media last week that called for Australia to prepare for war with China within three years. Grenfell said, "Australia is on the very frontlines of this. Labor, Liberal and the Greens have aligned the Australian population with plans for a catastrophic war in the Indo-Pacific.

He noted that the "independent experts" featured by Nine—who are, in reality, closely tied to weapons manufacturers and the military establishment—are "demanding that nuclear weapons be stationed in northern Australia and they're calling for conscription." Grenfell explained that the coming war with China, as well as the US-NATO war with Russia in Ukraine, are "not for democracy, but to ensure the hegemony of American imperialism."

Grenfell stressed the urgency of building an international anti-war movement of the working class, based on a socialist program.

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.

Roberto, a truck driver who travels between Melbourne and Sydney, said that the US is the greatest terrorist in the world: "They wage military coups in other countries, such as in Chile in 1973. One thousand people are still missing in that country. I come from a country in which you saw the real face of imperialism, of America.

"They say they are so worried about the freedom of people in Ukraine, but they never cared about the freedom of Palestinian people. The US only cares about money. They say they need to defend Ukrainian democracy ... more than a million people died from the Iraq War and there has been no democracy.

"The actual motives for the US in the Ukraine war are money and resources, but mainly to completely destroy Russia and open the door for a war against China. Australia is also preparing for war against China, saying they are expansionist. But they have never invaded any country like the US, and they are Australia's largest trading partner.

"But there is another option from capitalism. Capitalism is like a jungle. You do what you need to do to survive. If you need to kill someone, or step on the head of your friend, that's capitalism.

"Socialism is totally different. It's guided by equality and supporting healthcare, education and so on. Socialism is for the working class. Capitalism is for the capitalist class. I am an optimist and I see that socialism will be the future."

Omer, a disability support worker, said he was "shocked" by the possibility that he and other young people would be forced into war: "I'm not ready [for] conscription, and I don't think a lot of our youth are.

It's terrible—I don't want to live in that type of world.”

Omer was critical of the United States for “feeding Ukraine all these weapons.” He continued: “They just want it to escalate into something massive. This could drag us into a global war that would never end.”

He drew a link between the slashing of social spending and the escalation in military expenditure, in Australia and elsewhere: “There needs to be more investment in health care and education, instead of just feeding these corporate war machines.

“I just feel that capitalism is not sustainable. It's all about profit and extracting resources, but to what end? That can't go on forever. With climate change, we can see the devastating effects of capitalism all around the world.”

Chad, a middle-aged retail worker, said: “Housing affordability is getting tougher, electricity prices are going up. I'm working two jobs at the moment, every second weekend as a casual. I wouldn't like to have kids right now, the cost of daycare, baby formula, nappies, everything is just expensive.

“Five years ago, you used to be able to go out and get a cheap meal. I can't remember the last time we went to a supermarket and spent less than \$100 for a few meals. This is for basic staples, eggs, bread, milk, mince, chicken breast. This isn't lamb cutlets or fine-dining steak.

“I know banks and businesses aren't in it to break even. But when they're making massive profits, quarterly, whilst people out there are struggling, that's a problem.

“I think some of these politicians don't live in our shoes, they are on massive salaries. A lot of the Labor people now had union jobs in the past and slid straight into politics. Whilst talking about standing up for working people they've never had to wonder how they will fill the car or get groceries.

Lisa, a small business owner, said: “I used to feel safe. I've got a lot of kids and a big family, and now, I actually wish I hadn't had a lot of kids and brought them into this world, because it's a scary world, and god knows where it's going to end up.”

Lisa professed her support and concern for persecuted journalist Julian Assange: “He's an absolutely brave human being. Sadly I feel he'll never be freed. He should be.”

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