

Australian workers and youth support SEP election campaign

Our reporters
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In the lead-up to the Australian federal election on May 3, Socialist Equality Party (SEP) candidates, members and supporters are campaigning regularly at factories, hospitals, universities and in working-class suburbs.

Workers and young people are increasingly hostile to the war and austerity agenda of the entire political establishment. None of the pro-business parliamentary parties, including Labor, the Liberal-Nationals and the Greens, has any answer to the deepening social crisis confronting the working class or the growing threat of world war.

As representatives of the only party advancing an alternative political perspective, SEP candidates and campaigners have received a warm response from workers and youth.

In Brisbane, longstanding SEP national committee member and *World Socialist Web Site* writer Mike Head is standing for the lower house seat of Oxley, a working-class electorate in Brisbane's west. Head, along with SEP members and supporters, have spoken to workers at shopping centres in Richlands, Inala, Goodna and Oxley, and at the Volvo Trucks plant in Wacol.

In Melbourne, campaigns have centred on the Calwell electorate where Morgan Peach is standing for the lower house. This includes Broadmeadows and Dallas, once centres of manufacturing but have been hit with sweeping job cuts over recent decades. SEP campaigners have also spoken to workers at workplaces, including a Woolworths warehouse that was part of a major strike late last year.

Pia, who works as a cleaner, told SEP campaigners: "I used to be a staunch Labor supporter but no longer. I don't like any of the parties, I am looking for something else. I am utterly sick and tired of politicians making promises and never keeping them. I am looking for politicians with honesty, not speaking for big business and looking after themselves.

"The cost of living is so bad, every single thing is going

up. Two bags of groceries at the supermarket costs so much and you get nothing. I know people who in winter have no money for heating so all they can do is keep warm under blankets."

Sujan, an engineering student, said: "Trump is not fair. He should treat people as human beings but has done so much that is bad. I hate war. There are so many people that are innocent who are killed and they don't even know why.

"America is blocking China but everyone needs goods from China. I think the US is jealous of China. America imports many goods from there.

"I feel like life is getting harder. It is more expensive every day. It's hard to pay the rent. I'm a student, but I have to work four days a week in order to survive."

Danielle said: "The election campaign is a whole lot of lies. The things they say that they will improve on, they never do. Food is so expensive; fruit, vegetables and meat are so high these days. Then on top of that, bills such as water, internet, rates, are now being ridiculously priced.

"I don't like Trump at all. He's so arrogant and racist. Australia seems to be trying to be like America."

Robert Creech is standing in the Newcastle electorate, named after the city north of Sydney that was formerly a centre of the Australian steel industry. SEP members and supporters have campaigned at local shopping centres, workplaces and on the University of Newcastle campus. The party also spoke with doctors at John Hunter Hospital taking part in a three-day strike across New South Wales (NSW) last week.

Sara, who teaches nursing, attended a meeting on the election held jointly by the SEP and its youth wing, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE).

She said: "I'm very impressed with the knowledge of the history of socialism, it's something I certainly need to go home and think about. These sorts of movements are

important to me. The people on the ground floor, we need to have a say and we are certainly not getting a say anymore.”

Sara spoke about the conditions confronting nurses, who in New South Wales confront a state Labor government that is determined to impose a miserly nominal wage rise of just over 3 percent per annum. Labor was heavily promoted by the unions in the 2023 state election as a panacea for the dire wages and conditions faced by health workers and others in the public sector, but this has been quickly proved a fraud.

She said: “It is definitely not appropriate the way that nurses are being treated. When you think of what nurses do, they are the people with the patients all of the time. I respect all of the other health providers, doctors, but they come in to see a patient once or twice a day. The nurses are there with the patients and their families day in and day out supporting their health.”

“Nurses are giving all the time, nurses are exhausted. We’ve lost something like 22,000 nurses during COVID. There is a worldwide shortage of nurses and that’s going to increase with time unless we do something to improve their work-life balance.

“Recently the government has given \$300 per week to student nurses for when they do their placement. But it’s means-tested, so anyone who lives with their parents will not get it. It also doesn’t apply to international students.

“I’m shocked by the current people in power who are saying that the housing shortage is due to international students. It absolutely is not.

Sara was concerned about the impact of US President Donald Trump and other far-right forces: “He is destroying any idea of social equity. People with disabilities have lost their rights, universities have lost funding, Johns Hopkins has lost millions of dollars in funding—huge work and research there on healthcare. The US has withdrawn from the World Health Organisation.

“It is a disaster what is happening. It can’t go on or the world will crumble. One only needs to look at the people who went to his ceremony when he was elected. All the oligarchs—Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg—were all there.”

Sara noted that Australia was not immune to these developments: “You have Clive Palmer over here, the Trumpet of Patriots. There needs to be something done about that.

“There is a lot of work to do and I am hopeful that the SEP can do something about it.”

In Sydney, SEP candidates for the Senate in NSW, Max

Boddy and Warwick Dove, have spoken to workers at Kellogg’s, where a strike was recently called off at the eleventh hour by the United Workers Union bureaucracy, as well as meat workers, postal workers and striking doctors. Campaigns have also been held across the city’s working-class west and southwest, and on campus.

Viransha, a Western Sydney University (WSU) student from South Asia, said, “I want to know more about socialism and capitalism, how the rich people are being corrupt and not giving advantage to the poor in the world. In India as well, the Congress and BJP favour the rich, not the poor, and in other countries like Pakistan and Nepal as well.

“There’s also a real threat of world war. War is happening in Gaza, and the trade war with China as well. Military bases are being established in Australia, by the US, which is preparing for war against China.”

He spoke about the silence of the Labor government and the entire political establishment on these escalating war plans: “I think it might be the case they’re keeping it secret. They’re not speaking about war, or the trade war.

“If there’s war between China and America, the whole world economy will be impacted as well. Countries’ resources will be diminished by the war. Workers should be in unity to stop the war.”

Lydia, a psychology student at WSU, attended the SEP-IYSSE election meeting “to learn more about socialism. I liked everything that the IYSSE campaigner was saying, including about how education should be free.”

Before the meeting, she “didn’t know that the Greens were supporting war. I didn’t realise how Trump and America has such a big impact on us and the influence it’s had on our government as well. Trump is teaming up with Albanese—they’re on his side. Things like that were interesting.”

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