

Workers and youth support SEP (Australia) election campaign

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP) members and supporters campaigning across Brisbane, Sydney, Newcastle and Melbourne for the May 3 federal election have encountered broad support from workers and young people, who are increasingly opposed to the pro-business, pro-war agenda of all the parliamentary parties.

SEP candidates have also been publishing videos on social media, advancing a socialist perspective to address the key issues in the election.

Georgette, a refugee support worker in the working-class Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows, spoke about the dire conditions confronting immigrants and refugees: “The government provide nothing, no Medicare, no financial support. It’s shocking.”

Families were only able to survive because of help from charities, she said. “A lot of the food banks help the asylum seekers, but it’s not enough. I hate that expression ‘beggars can’t be choosers.’ They are not beggars, they are humans. Australia was supposed to give them a home, somewhere to live, somewhere to look after their children, and the worst part is, I know families whose children were born here, given Australian citizenship, but the parents still don’t get anything.”

Georgette said the situation for refugees had worsened, “whether it’s Labor or Liberal. Even the Greens promised a lot and we got nothing out of them either.”

Asked about Israel’s brutal onslaught against the Palestinian people, she said: “It’s genocide, I don’t care how people look at it. I know people from that background, and it is devastating. Kids are being killed all the time, families are being bombed. It’s a disgrace, disgusting, words cannot express what people are going through.”

“It is very scary. Why are Labor and the Coalition part of this? They are not interested in us. We need a government that stands up for ordinary people.”

John, a Western Sydney high school student, said the cost of living was “really bad in Australia. The rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer.”

John didn’t think this would improve after the election. He said the Labor government was “not prioritising what is actually needed, like the schools. It’s overlooked compared to how much they’re spending on the military.

“Definitely the teachers are not getting paid enough, and there’s not enough teachers. There’s only one qualified Maths Extension 2 teacher in our school. So if more than 30 students want to do Maths Extension 2, some people will have to lose that opportunity, because of funding.”

Under the Albanese government, he said, “There hasn’t been a major change in anything, which is really necessary. Like investing money in the right places, where it’s actually needed—schools and hospitals, into the community, instead of the military.”

“The working-class perspective is really being overlooked [by the Labor government]. They should really focus more on what the people are saying.”

A student in Parramatta said the biggest issue facing the working class was “money. It’s a means to everything, food, clothing, events, activities. You can’t do anything without money, unfortunately.”

“All these parties, Labor, Liberal, whatever, it’s just a façade. At the end of the day they all want the same thing.”

He said Australia was not exempt from “the inflation that’s occurred all over the world. Because of inflation, we’re starting to see a bigger and bigger gap between the people who have means and those who don’t.”

“What me and my friends believe is that the people that have money are trying to find a way to keep us where we are in society. But we’re finally realising our rights. But they’re not going to just apologise and say, ‘you know what, let’s all just share the money.’”

“The more we continue to wake up to the injustices that have occurred, it’s just a matter of time until the masses realise the power that we really do have. I think it is inevitable, if the people act upon that, with [the SEP’s] leadership, for victory to occur.”

Kathy, an early childhood educator, said: “Living costs are getting really high now. People are facing financial difficulties paying for rent, food, their children. There’s not much support from the government, so it’s a really hard time for people who are not rich. Politicians don’t think about the rights of people who are not wealthy. This needs to change.”

Heba, met in Punchbowl in Sydney’s south-west, was born in England to an Iraqi family and lived in New Zealand most of her life, but has now moved to Australia.

She said: “I don’t get involved much in politics, but lately you have to because it’s all over.

“Trump is a laughing stock, everyone makes fun of him and yet whatever he wants is happening—for example, with the tariffs. What’s up with that deal? No one’s standing against him. Before I used to think he was just a funny guy with funny hair and a funny way of speaking, but now I reckon he’s a puppet for someone that is bigger than him.

“I can speak about what happened with the US and Iraq back then [in 2003]. No-one really spoke up at the time. In fact, the whole Middle East turned against Iraq. And then, years later, they came out and said, ‘Oh, we were wrong. We thought there were weapons, we thought there was this or that.’ But by then, people had already been killed.”

Warwick Dove, SEP candidate for the Senate in New South Wales (NSW), explained that in fact there had been mass protests against the invasion of Iraq by workers and young people worldwide, but the imperialist powers proceeded regardless.

He also raised that the United States had stirred up internal conflicts between different sects of the Muslim population in Iraq, in order to divide the working class.

Heba agreed, replying, “My dad is a Sunni and my

mum is a Shia, to which people are like ‘oh.’ But we don’t care—our next-door neighbour was Christian, there are Catholics, Orthodox. I have lived everywhere and I have learnt to treat people how they treat me, not on the basis that they’re Muslim, or Arab, or Christian, or atheist.”

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