

Australian workers, youth denounce police killing of homeless man

Our reporters
30 April 2025

Socialist Equality Party campaigners, led by Senate candidate in the federal election Taylor Hernan, spoke with workers and young people over the weekend in Footscray, Melbourne, where police shot dead 35-year-old Abdifatah Ahmed on April 17.

The police killing of a homeless and mentally ill man has triggered an outraged reaction, with hundreds of local residents rallying in the last two weeks at a vigil and demonstration. The SEP team distributed a *World Socialist Web Site* article that condemned the killing, outlined the class issues involved in what is only the latest in a series of police violence incidents, and indicted the Labor Party for its “law and order” agenda that has seen stepped up police repression on working-class communities.

Dut Dut told the WSWs: “Well, this is actually not lawful. It was not just one round [of bullets] that’s happened, it’s a few rounds. This was actually unlawful.

“It shouldn’t be the police reaction—they could have tasered and taken him and have him to calm down. He was a homeless person and he was suffering with his mental health. He didn’t know what he was doing; he was not a trouble maker. He was just a person trying to live, this person was an innocent person. I know the police have a duty to do their job, but at the same time we need the public and the council to build housing for the homeless people. We need the whole youth and community to act on that, and build social housing for others, and community and families too. There are kids on the street also.”

He continued: “We have elections coming on May 3 and the public needs to act and bring about change, because this matter is a matter for all the public.”

Carmel explained her reaction: “I thought it was really cruel. The police shouldn’t shoot homeless

people. It was just really, really very cruel.”

Asked about what should have been the response, she replied: “They should have called in the CAT [Crisis Assessment and Treatment, mental health response] team, because he had mental health issues. I really feel sorry for him, I really do. You know about the conditions in Footscray; they’re getting more serious, with the police coming through as more aggressive. They are coming through more frequently, and since this shooting has happened they are coming through more, and there’s been a lot more of them.”

Darren added: “If you’ve got a badge, uphold the law properly. Don’t take the law in your own hands, especially with mental health. If you’re going to be a police officer, use the position to uphold the law properly and not take the law in your own hands. They hide behind their badge, and they hide behind the commissioner, and the commissioner backs them. We homeless people, we’re in the worst situation of all, so why should we suffer?”

Rose said: “It’s absolutely horrifying! It’s so sad that they thought that they had no other way of managing a situation like that outside of taking a life. Lots of things should change, I think that the situation requires a multi-pronged response. If the response is to be holistic, it needs to respond to the root causes of the mental health and AOD [Alcohol and Other Drugs] situation that we’re seeing.

“I’m reluctant to say that throwing money at mental health is going to get to the bottom of this. I think people need to have other supports, you know, not everyone can go into a psych office and solve all their problems then and there. I think people need jobs. People need to be in community. People need to have a purpose in their life and see themselves reflected in the society as being a valuable contributor, and some types

of mental health solutions aren't going to do that."

Frank, a middle-aged Footscray resident, explained that he knew Abdifatah Ahmed: "I used to give him cigarettes when I would walk past him," adding: "Where were the tasers? Is that what they teach the police now? How to shoot in the head first and not even release the buckle of the taser? It spins my head around, because I have no doubt in my mind that they could have 100 percent done something to prevent that. You have to be in arm's reach to stab somebody, but I'm sure that they shot him from a distance."

Frank continued: "I was homeless myself not too long ago and my mate put me up. And he's unemployed and he earns around \$800 a fortnight, \$500 of that goes to his rent, and the welfare is supposed to help people like that. It's just a joke. There needs to be better access to public housing, and rent to be 30 percent of your income, not 65 or 70 percent. It's a real joke."

He explained that when homeless he was told the waiting list for public housing was 7–10 years. Asked if there was any assistance from the major parties, Frank responded firmly: "No, not at all. They might talk the talk but when it comes to walking the walk... I really don't have an answer but I just know that it's scary, you know. I've got three kids under twelve. What hope have they got by the time they're adults?"

A young woman named **Sore** said: "I feel like the killing was unfair, it was an injustice. I believe that the police should have used different strategies. The outcome was terrible. The way they went about it, it could have been done differently. I believe that it's unnecessary for anyone to be shot, however many times they were. I think maybe if we had more rehab, different facilities and organisations for the homeless, then they wouldn't end up in the situation that Abdifatah was in. I think he needed more than rehab. I think he needed someone to care for, to listen to."

"He was homeless, and he was also dealing with mental health problems. So he needed help, and then the police were the first to respond. So it's very unfortunate that the shooting happened from the people that were supposed to be there for him. I myself am one of those residents who have lived in public housing. So I know the benefits and the impacts it has on us. I think housing is really important for a lot of reasons. It's a necessity, it's not a choice. Everybody deserves to have

a shelter over their heads. It's a human right. So without having those, someone's rights are being breached and that's not good.

"Labor and Liberal are not really focused on housing and what's necessary for the people. I think they're more focused on the rich. You know, making the rich richer. It would be nice if we can have a party that advocates for the disadvantaged. And then so we wouldn't have incidents like what happened on Easter."

Theo said, "It's another example of state violence. And the lack of a complex approach to the complex issues that we face in society, and a willingness to engage with those issues, rather than revert to the gun and engage in violence."

"There needs to be security in terms of housing, in terms of support, being able to provide someone with regularity, with a sense of stability and security. There need to be good jobs and affordable housing. The ability to find help and to have financial stability, for Centrelink to be enough for people to not have to stress about how to get by day to day, where to find food, where to find shelter. All those, there are many things that can be improved."

Theo added: "I think that is a class issue, the way in which the demographics of these areas are being changed, moving populations around. There is a move to push working-class people out of the inner city and to replace them with private housing. Now that rich people want to live in the inner city, it just means that those people who provide services now have to travel way more, they have more stress placed on their lives. The flow-on effects of that are huge."

Authorised by Cheryl Crisp for the Socialist Equality Party, Level 1/457-459 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010, Australia.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact