

Australian workers and youth oppose war and Trump on election day

Our reporters
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Saturday's Australian federal election resulted in the victory of the Labor Party and its return to majority government. The outcome was not a mass popular endorsement of Labor, but a repudiation of the Liberal-National Coalition and particularly its association with fascistic US President Donald Trump and his program of trade war, militarism, attacks on civil liberties and on social spending.

That was underscored in the discussions and interviews conducted by Socialist Equality Party (SEP) campaigners at polling booths in the key working-class electorates where the SEP stood—Brisbane's Oxley electorate, Melbourne's Calwell and the New South Wales seat of Newcastle, as well as in southwest Sydney.

Our candidates, members and supporters found that workers and young people are deeply concerned about the global impact of Trump and the drive towards world war. Many responded with enthusiasm to the SEP's call to build an international anti-war movement in the working class based on a fight for socialism, the only alternative to capitalist barbarism.

The *World Socialist Web Site* is publishing today a selection of comments from voters on polling day, with more to follow in the coming days.

At the Inala-Richlands polling booth in Brisbane, **Helen**, a former public service worker, had a discussion with Mike Head, the SEP candidate for Oxley, firstly about why the Gaza genocide was being buried in the election campaign, including by Labor and the Greens.

"I think it's the Australian government and others trying to appease the US. It's damned obvious that there's a genocide going on and that the Palestinians have been oppressed for a very long time. War criminals need to be charged as such, and it all needs to stop. The whole world needs to help rebuild and let the Palestinians have their country, their land and live peacefully.

"We need to stop pretending that the Israelis are defending their country. They are not defending, they are attacking and using money—billions and billions of dollars—that has been thrown at them by the United States and all the billionaires."

Head said the SEP was warning that this was not just Gaza, but part of the wider drive by the US ruling class to dominate the world, now under the Trump administration's banner of "Make America Great Again."

Helen responded: "What does MAGA really mean? The real way to make America great is to have more equity and equality. It

doesn't make the world, or any country or community, a better place if it's ruled by people with superiority complexes and no ethics and no thoughts for other people. That doesn't help. Ultimately, I don't know what they want to do with their hundreds of millions or billions of dollars."

Helen agreed that this was the system of capitalism. "They have to make more and more money, even at the expense of destroying the world."

Asked about the SEP's fight for a socialist answer, Helen said: "If you work hard you deserve to have the rewards for it, but it doesn't need to be so ridiculous. It needs to be far more equitable, fair and just. So that everybody can live peacefully and comfortably, with their needs met."

Head said that sounded like socialism. It meant the working class taking control of the wealth of society, which workers produce, and using it for the benefit of all, instead of being siphoned off into the hands of the billionaires and oligarchs.

Helen replied: "Yes. That is so wrong. People like Elon Musk. How can he get to where he is? Just by being greedy."

She added: "I hope that we have enough people in parliament to hold the government to account, whoever gets in, so they actually care about social issues and climate change, which needs to be dealt with, instead of drilling for more oil and gas, not like it has been."

Head said such a transformation would not happen through parliament. It would require the overturn of the entire economic and political order of the capitalist class.

Helen agreed but commented: "A lot of people need to be educated to understand this. People only believe what they hear, what they're told—a lot of it lies. So it's difficult, but socialism definitely has a place here. People have to know what socialism is."

Luis, an engineer originally from Peru, spoke with SEP campaigners in the southwest Sydney suburb of Bankstown. He said: "With this national election I've been in Australia 34 years. We can vote for any candidate, but we never win."

About the US-NATO war in Ukraine he said: "I think the plan is to pull Russia into pieces, so they can divide and rule. This is capitalist, imperialist thinking, always. Divide and rule.

"American and Australian governments are a club, they always work together. If America is at war, Australia is going to support that war, whatever they do.

"They want to carve it into pieces like they did with Yugoslavia.

There they've cut it in pieces, into 10 countries, and now they're all fighting each other. For what? For the interests of some capitalists there or corporations."

"Today there is a budget for weapons but there is no budget for hospitals or schools. We need money to go where we have our needs, to hospitals, education, social care, old people and disability.

"The cost of living is going high, the cost of houses is very high. Kids today, I don't know how they can have a house. When I came to Australia in 1991, the minimum wage was \$10 an hour and you could afford a house in the west of Sydney in Campbelltown or Liverpool, for \$110,000 or \$120,000.

"Today, to be at that stage, you would need to earn \$100 an hour to afford a \$1 million house. It's really mission impossible, because nobody will pay you \$100 an hour. So in fact, we are losing, we are going down."

Chris, 37, is currently unemployed. He said: "I've had some stress-related health issues and been struggling with that. I'm trying to get back into part time work. I used to do a lot of warehouse work, storeman work, labouring, tiling, forklift driving. There's not enough jobs to go around.

"There's definitely tensions between China and the US right now, especially with the tariffs. Who knows what is going on behind the curtains. Both Labor and Liberal have put Australia on the frontline of a war between them. We should all be cautious of that. I can foresee a war happening in the future, I hope it doesn't.

"I used to like Trump but I don't anymore. I didn't see his true colours. They came out especially this term when he got voted back in again. He is very Hitler-like.

His partner **Jessica** added, "Trump said he wanted to move all the people out of Gaza and move them away from their land."

In Melbourne, **Sharon** told SEP campaigners: "War is approaching, every government is so unstable, there is a grab for resources and they are using their people. When you look at history, what does war achieve ever? I don't think it is just to do with religion. That is not the main issue. The issue is grab for political gain. They wish to grab more land. They don't care about the innocent people.

"Trump is a salesman—he projects himself and sells himself. He will find a way to stay in office after his term. He's talking about taking over Greenland by force. But what about the innocent people involved?

"I have no time for Labor, Liberal or the Greens. The Liberals are predominantly for the rich. Labor, though, is not for the working class. Business goes into their pockets and funds the big parties. The majority of people pay taxes, but not the rich."

Hesham, a truck driver, said: "War is not good. I was in the first Iraq war in the military in the 90s and I ran away. I didn't agree with war, so I ran away, and I ended up in Australia. I am not fighting in a war that someone stupid calls for—it is the big people who decide on war not us.

"We can say 'no,' that we don't accept it. I went to the city two times to the demonstrations against war in Gaza, but I don't think it worked because the big people don't listen and they think what they want and they do things that are not right. We have to do something to stop this."

Hesham also spoke about the deepening social crisis: "Everything is going up and the wages are going down, some people are not even working—I really don't know how some families cope."

At his work, he said: "Sometimes the company threatens us to get rid of those workers on contract—they got rid of five people recently. Sometimes we work only three days, one day working 8 hours, sometimes 10 and then 6 hours. Everything is casual."

Raj, a transport worker, and **Sunaina**, a nurse, spoke with SEP campaigners in Melbourne about the danger of war.

Sunaina said: "I think the war in Gaza is about controlling the land, controlling the country. Superpowers trying to control those countries. It's about oil, maybe, controlling oil." On the danger of a broader war and the role of the United States, she said "I think war is for the US to continue to be a superpower, to enhance their economy more and more."

Raj added: "Trump's policy is to put the US economy first and put everyone else last. Increasing the tariffs on China is a trade war. For them war is a business so they can sell bombs. When war stops their country stops."

Raj also spoke about the cost-of-living crisis in Australia: "The major parties are responsible for the spike in inflation. In the past, things were going up 2 percent. Since COVID happened, inflation rates are 5 or 6 percent, and only in the last year has it gone down."

Theo, a retired Telstra worker, said: "I don't know why they spend so much money on wars. Why don't they look after the homeless who are there in the city just in blankets. Don't build nuclear submarines—how many billions will be spent on war? Spend the money on people."

On the increased cost of living, he said: "I'm on a pension. I can't afford to buy all the things I want or need. I always have to think twice."

Vong, a manufacturing worker, said the SEP's perspective for an international movement of the working class against war was "a great idea. I'm just an everyday normal labourer, I'm nothing special. Doing this alone, it's impossible, but with everyone coming together as a big group, I think it will happen."

His partner **Sara** added: "This is our first time hearing all of this. We don't hear this from the news. I want to go back [into the polling booth] and change my vote."



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