

# Australian students speak on mobilising workers to stop the Gaza genocide

Our reporters  
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Across Australia, student general meetings were held over the last two weeks to vote on a “National Referendum for Palestine.” The meetings drew significant numbers of students who are increasingly disgusted with Israel’s genocidal onslaught on Gaza and the complicity of the Australian Labor government.

However, the motions advanced by the meeting organisers, the National Union of Students and pseudo-left organisations such as Socialist Alternative, followed the bankrupt line of futile moral appeals to the very forces carrying out the genocide, including Labor and university managements that have weapons partnerships with Israel.

After two years of global protests, the notion that capitalist governments will listen to reason has been exposed as false, as the imperialist powers, led by the fascistic Trump administration, continue their barbaric war of extermination against the Palestinians.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) sought to present alternative motions to these meetings, calling on students to mount a struggle against Labor and for the mobilisation of the working class to end war and genocide. This perspective was censored by the meeting organisers in Melbourne, at the University of Melbourne and Victoria University (VU), where IYSSE members were blocked from speaking.

Read the full report of the Melbourne meetings here.

The IYSSE spoke with students attending the meetings on the failure of the global protests to effect change and what is required to stop the genocide and imperialist war.

An **American exchange student**, who asked to remain anonymous, witnessed the meeting organisers blocking IYSSE club president Morgan Peach from speaking on stage. He said, “That was so undemocratic!

They were clearly cherry-picking their own members [i.e. of Socialist Alternative] from the audience and getting them to speak. This was supposed to be a democratic forum, it was being called a student general meeting.”

**Claire**, a student at the University of Melbourne, spoke with IYSSE members before the special general meeting started. She said she came to the meeting “because I believe in a mass student movement to defend the right to protest on campus and also to support Palestine. I think a lot more people are just waking up now because of how in your face it is with Gaza.”

Asked about the Labor government’s “recognition” of a Palestinian state, she said, “I don’t think [Prime Minister Anthony] Albanese had a sudden change of heart. I don’t think he thought, ‘Maybe I should try a little bit?’ Maybe that’s what protest will get us, a government official saying something in parliament. But I don’t want that.”

She said the Australian government is “setting itself up to engage in wars to come. It is not breaking that cycle of war, but is continuing down a path where it is agreeing to see genocide and war—what’s happening in Gaza—happen across the world.”

Asked why two years of mass international protests had not stopped the genocide, she spoke about the failure of moral appeals to criminal warmongers. “The protests still exist within the logic of the system. They still make sense within a world that makes no sense. What frustrates me about the ways in which we organise is that it feels like the protests exist within the logic of the oppression.”

Claire attends most of the weekly pro-Palestine rallies in Melbourne, but said that they can “placate people who say, ‘I’m glad I got that out of me. Let me go

back to work. Let me not take other actions.”

She agreed with the IYSSE’s call for the mass mobilisation of “workers to stop the arms being sent to Israel. Students and workers have always been linked.”

Referring to the conditions facing students, she said, “The university is not going to solve any of our problems. It’s about making money. My tuition is so expensive. Now you have to repay your HECS debt [government organised student loans] at below minimum wage.” She said that under capitalism, “people are alienated from the life that they were promised. No one is going to get a house and two cars anymore. The future that we were promised is gone, it has never existed and was never meant for us.”

An **Iranian student** said that she attended many of the weekly rallies in Melbourne protesting the genocide. When asked whether she thinks this has been effective, she said: “Yes and no. Yes, it continues to raise awareness of the plight of Palestinians in Gaza. But also no, because the atrocities have only deepened, even with global protests.”

She understood that the Labor government was providing political and material support to Israel, along with the major imperialist powers. She also knew the genocide was part of a broader imperialist war drive, targeting Iran, Russia and China, in which the Australian government is involved. “How then do we stop genocide if Labor and the unions aren’t doing anything to stop it? There is a feeling of hopelessness.”

She responded positively to the IYSSE’s call for an independent movement of the working class against Labor and the pro-war union bureaucracies.

**Jake**, a cybersecurity student and an IYSSE member at VU, attended the meeting at the university’s Footscray Nicholson campus, where the IYSSE was prevented from speaking.

“That speaks volumes on the way that they [Socialist Alternative] like to run things,” he said. “They speak, everyone else listens and nobody can question them. Above all, they distract from the real issue which brought me here today, to target the system that creates situations like what’s going on in Palestine. That’s what my focus is. I found it very disappointing that they chose to be authoritarian in their way of handling things.

He went on: “The genocide is abhorrent. It’s commonsense really, most people recognise these are

war crimes, crimes against humanity. All the first-world governments are complicit either through inaction or enabling it by supplying the tools needed for the ongoing killings, depriving the Palestinians of basic human necessities like food and water.

“Capitalist society needs poverty, famine and war in order to thrive, it relies on that. The main issue is that people need to become more aware of their common enemy. Under capitalism, it’s inevitable that the majority of people have to suffer in order for a select few people to get profits.”

On the pseudo-left’s perspective of pressuring the political establishment, Jake said: “A capitalist government is not going to be persuaded by a letter saying, ‘We’re not happy with you.’ That’s been ineffective so far. I think we need to hit them where their heart lies most, and that’s their wallet. We need targeted industrial actions, interrupting supply chains, and workers’ strikes.

“As for the meeting today, it’s all well and good to do rehearsed chants and put it on social media. But if you want actual practical change and an end to the genocide, you need to target the capitalist system. The organisation of strikes and workers’ action, that’s a realistic way to stop war.”



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