

South Australian election will resolve nothing for workers: Build a socialist movement against austerity and war!

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)

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The South Australian state election this Saturday will not resolve a single issue facing workers and young people. Whatever the result, the incoming administration will continue to impose the burden of the cost-of-living crisis on the working class, while cutting already crisis-ridden social services and supporting the militarist program of the federal Labor government.

The election underscores the absence of any alternative for working people, within the existing political establishment. It is being contested by an incumbent Labor government that is widely despised after four years of breaking its last election promises and governing in the interests of big business; a rump Liberal Party in crisis, and a far-right, anti-immigrant One Nation that is cynically seeking to exploit mounting discontent.

The Socialist Equality Party is not standing candidates in this election, but we are campaigning to provide the working class with a genuine alternative.

We state bluntly to workers and young people that the issue is not who you vote for on Saturday, but what political perspective you fight for after the election. What is urgently needed is to build a socialist movement of the working class, in opposition to a capitalist system in breakdown that offers a future of mass poverty, inequality, authoritarianism and war.

That is shown by the context. The election is being held three weeks into the US-led war against Iran, a massive crime that has set the Middle East ablaze and further destabilised the entire world.

The federal Labor government, with the backing of the entire political establishment, including the state administrations, has been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of this illegal war in the world. Australia, under Labor, is an active participant, including through the dispatch of a warplane, missiles and troops.

Australia's involvement goes beyond that deployment. Its military is completely integrated into the US war machine, whose onslaught against Iran is bound up with the preparations for a world war targeting Russia and China, aimed at reversing American imperialism's economic decline.

That integration is demonstrated in South Australia. On the eve of the state election, Labor Premier Peter Malinauskas and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese unveiled a \$30 million plan for the Osborne Naval Shipyard, so that it can produce nuclear-powered submarines under the AUKUS pact with the US and the UK. As

part of AUKUS, the South Australian government has struck partnerships with the leading US arms companies, including for their increasing involvement in university programs.

The expansion of the military industry is such that South Australia has been dubbed "the defence state." But AUKUS has nothing to do with defence. The submarines and all the military infrastructure to be developed are aimed at preparing an aggressive US-led war against China that would threaten a nuclear armageddon.

Labor knows there is widespread anti-war sentiment, expressed in national polling conducted by Resolve, which shows that more than two-thirds of the population oppose Australia's participation in the war against Iran. That is why, having touted AUKUS as a defining policy for South Australia prior to the election, Malinauskas has scarcely mentioned it during the campaign.

But Labor is not only trying to suppress anti-war sentiment through a conspiracy of silence. The Malinauskas government has been at the forefront of cracking down on the mass opposition to the Israeli genocide in Gaza. Malinauskas personally intervened earlier this year to bar Palestinian-Australian author Randa Abdel-Fatah from the Adelaide Writers' Festival, slandering her in Trumpian fashion for opposing Israel's war crimes.

It is the working class that will pay for the war. Already, in South Australia, as nationally, petrol prices are at record levels. The federal Treasury has warned that inflation, already resurging, could exceed 5 percent by the end of the year. The Reserve Bank is again hiking interest rates, in a program that will do nothing to reduce inflation, but will inflict more pain on mortgage-holders and drive up unemployment.

This new offensive comes on top of a massive reversal in the conditions of the working class, that has been enforced nationally by the Labor government and in South Australia by the Malinauskas administration, with the assistance of the trade unions.

Over the past five years, median home prices in Adelaide have almost doubled to \$929,000, with an increase of \$118,600 in the past 12 months alone, according to PropTrack. Average rents have increased with similar rapidity, to an average of around \$630 a week. There is an estimated shortfall of 36,000 affordable dwellings in the state and at least 7,000 people are homeless.

SGS Economics' 2025 Rental Affordability Index found that the

median rent consumed 30 percent of average rental household income, the standard threshold for “rental stress.” According to the Salvation Army, 17 percent of children in the state live in poverty, while the government’s own data indicate that 16 percent of households struggle to buy food.

This social hardship has been imposed by the state Labor government on behalf of the banks and big business. Labor boasted that its 2025–26 budget again produced a surplus as it provided just \$118.3 million over five years in new cost-of-living relief, including pathetically small reductions to school and public transport costs. Its previous three budgets, delivered amid the soaring cost of living, provided relief of less than \$1,000 per eligible household annually on average, spread thinly across utilities, energy and general concessions.

In this election, Labor is not even advancing such relief measures. Its keynote policies on housing are handouts to the property developers that will drive up costs for working people. That includes a pledge that Labor will financially underwrite up to \$500 million worth of private apartment construction in central Adelaide, and another \$500 million to provide property developers with land for private construction.

Labor has also dispensed with any pretence that it will resolve the crisis of ambulances “ramping” outside hospitals. That was its key promise in the 2022 election, but ramping has increased each year under Labor, reaching a record last year. Labor is funding the public health sector at below-projected operating costs, with last year’s budget demanding that SA Health find \$1.3 billion in “savings” over four years.

At the same time, Labor and the unions are collaborating to impose sellout deals on public sector workers. On the eve of the campaign, the nurses union shut down industrial action by its members and struck an agreement with the government that entrenches low pay and intolerable conditions in the sector.

The partnership of Labor and the corporatised union bureaucracy has played the central role in a decades-long assault on the working class. That included the shutdown of car production, in league with the major auto corporations, that has left areas of northern Adelaide in economic depression, with unemployment approaching 20 percent.

In this election, the Liberals are in crisis, mirroring the breakdown of the traditional conservative party nationally. The broad middle-class that was once the base of the Liberals no longer exists after decades of social polarisation. At the same time, Labor is so right-wing that its policies are virtually indistinguishable from what the Liberals advance.

The social crisis imposed by Labor and the unions has created the conditions for the far-right One Nation to make an appeal to widespread discontent. It is pointing to the housing, cost-of-living and healthcare crises and to the rotten character of the two major parties.

One Nation’s populist pitch is a sham. The party’s lead South Australian candidate Cory Bernardi was a right-wing Liberal who participated in pro-business federal governments. Its leader, Pauline Hanson, is flying around the country on a private jet provided by mining baron Gina Rinehart, Australia’s wealthiest individual. One Nation’s scapegoating of immigrants serves to

divide the working class and to shield opposition to the capitalist ruling class that it defends and collaborates with.

One Nation’s ability to make its phony pitch is aided by the bankruptcy of the official “left.” The Greens, despite their occasional rhetoric, are a pro-capitalist party of the upper middle-class. They simply have no interest in the problems confronting workers. The Greens’ campaign centres on the fraud that if a handful of its candidates are elected, they will “push” a pro-business and pro-war Labor government to implement minor reforms.

The campaigns of the pseudo-left groups, the South Australian Socialists and Socialist Alliance, are equally bereft. The present vast sums expended on AUKUS and Labor’s pro-business policies are presented as state issues, that will somehow be resolved through the moth-eaten framework of state parliament. Neither even pretend to be advancing a revolutionary perspective against a capitalist system that is rotting on its feet. The pseudo-left is tied by a thousand strings to the defenders of the capitalist order, including the Greens, the union bureaucracy and through it, the Labor Party itself.

The Socialist Equality Party is fighting to build the genuine alternative: an independent movement of the working class, directed against the entire political establishment and capitalism.

We fight for the construction of rank-and-file committees, completely independent of the union bureaucracies, in the hospitals, schools, factories and every workplace. Such committees, controlled by workers themselves, can break the isolation and oppose the sellouts imposed by Labor and the unions, and organise a political and industrial counter-offensive aimed at securing decent wages and working conditions, against the relentless cuts.

The SEP calls for billions of dollars to be invested in public education, healthcare and other vital social services, and for a massive expansion of public housing to guarantee everyone the right to an affordable home. The claims that there is “no money” for these social needs are a lie. The issue is that the social resources are being wasted on AUKUS, war and to boost the fortunes of the corporations and the ultra-wealthy.

That is why a socialist program is required, aimed at placing the banks and the corporations under public ownership and democratic workers’ control. The fight for such a revolutionary alternative is inseparable from the struggle to unite the working class internationally against the descent into a world war and the source of that danger, the capitalist system. We call on workers and young people looking for an alternative to the deepening barbarism to contact the SEP today and join our party.



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