

SEP (Australia) meetings oppose Iran war and austerity offensive against working class

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2 June 2026

Over the past several weeks, the Socialist Equality Party (Australia), Socialist Equality Group (New Zealand) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality have held a series of public meetings titled, “Stop the imperialist war on Iran! Oppose Labor’s austerity program! Fight for socialism!”

These important political events in Wellington, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney were attended by industrial, health and education workers, as well as students and public housing residents, currently fighting against the destruction of their homes by the Victorian Labor government. The final meeting in the series will be held Saturday June 6 at the University of Newcastle and online. Register now.

The meetings placed the Iran war in the political and historical context of the deepening crisis of global capitalism, and outlined the socialist and internationalist strategy that must be fought for in order to stop it.

The Sydney meeting on Sunday featured speakers Cheryl Crisp, national secretary of the SEP and Zach Diotte, president of the IYSSE at Western Sydney University, and was chaired by Max Boddy, assistant national secretary of the SEP. A video recording of Crisp’s report is published above.

Diotte’s opening report provided a concrete picture of the devastation. He described the initial attack on February 28 as a “massive sneak attack” that struck military bases, government facilities and cities across Iran, killing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in the opening salvo. He noted that “schools, hospitals and cultural heritage sites have been destroyed.”

Diotte said that, while the “media and political establishment would have you believe this war is about ‘freeing’ the Iranian people from a despotic regime, or about Iran’s nuclear program,” both were fraudulent pretexts.

In fact, he explained, “the driver of US policy toward

Iran is oil, strategic control and the suppression of any regional power that challenges US dominance. These attacks are part of a single strategic offensive—alongside the assault on Venezuela and Cuba, the ongoing proxy war with Russia and preparations for war against China.”

Noting the complicity of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the Labor government in the war against Iran and US-led war plans in general, Diotte pointed to the deepening assault on the working class in Australia being carried out in parallel with the military escalation.

“Labor has committed \$60 billion a year to military spending, with a further \$53 billion over the decade,” he said. “That money must come from social spending. The centrepiece of the latest budget is the destruction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.”

Labor’s cuts will see at least 300,000 people with disabilities removed from the scheme entirely, while hundreds of thousands more will have their supports slashed to little more than the absolute minimum necessary to sustain life.

Referring to strike action by workers across Europe, Latin America and Asia, as well as in Australia, Diotte said, “What these struggles point to is that workers in Australia and around the world are willing to fight. They are angry. They are increasingly looking for answers. But the decisive question is this: On what political perspective are workers going to fight?”

The answer, he concluded, “requires a decisive political break from Labor, from the union bureaucracies that enforce its program, and from all organisations that keep opposition trapped within the confines of capitalism. It requires building independent rank-and-file committees in every school, hospital, and workplace, linked through the IWA-RFC. And it requires a socialist leadership—the SEP and IYSSE are fighting to building that leadership. We urge everyone to join us and participate in this fight.”

Crisp located the war in a broader historical framework.

Drawing on recent lectures by David North, she said the war on Iran was “the culmination of a distinct 35-year historical period that opened with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991.” She emphasised that “what failed in the USSR was not socialism but Stalinism—the nationalist, bureaucratic betrayal of October 1917, the program of ‘socialism in one country’ that detached the Soviet state from the international working class and proved economically and politically bankrupt.”

The dissolution of the Soviet Union removed a principal strategic constraint on the use of American military power, Crisp said, allowing US imperialism to embark on three and a half decades of “unrelenting military aggression” from Iraq to Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and now Iran.

She explained that these wars were not discrete episodes, but “component parts of a single continuous historical trajectory: the attempt by American capitalism to overcome through military violence a contradiction it cannot overcome by economic means—the contradiction between the global character of modern production and the nation-state system.”

Noting that it was the same contradiction that produced the two world wars of the 20th century, Crisp warned that “A third world war is already unfolding. The war against Iran is the sharpest expression of a global rampage by the Trump administration,” directed above all against China, the chief threat to US hegemony.

Crisp noted that “within three hours of the initial strikes on Iran, Anthony Albanese was among the very first leaders in the world to endorse them,” regurgitating “every one of the lying talking points prepared by Washington and Tel Aviv.” Moreover, the Labor government has contributed materially to the illegal war, through military intelligence and communications services as well as the secret deployment of troops.

Crisp argued that those who profess surprise at Labor’s full-throated backing of the war have forgotten or ignored the party’s real history. Founded in 1890 on the racist White Australia policy and the subordination of the working class to Australian capitalism and the British Empire, Labor was identified by Lenin as “an organisation of the bourgeoisie which exists to dupe the workers.”

She recalled Labor’s pledge of “to the last man and the last shilling” to British imperialism in the First World War, its attempts to impose conscription, and the Curtin government’s role in shifting Australia’s allegiance from Britain to the United States in World War II. Subsequent

Labor governments supported the US-led wars in Korea and Vietnam, joined the 1991 Gulf War, backed the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and, in 2011, signed onto the US “pivot to Asia,” the vast military build-up directed against China.

Crisp highlighted the “acute crisis of bourgeois rule” in Australia. The traditional two-party duopoly of Labor and the Liberal–National Coalition, which has administered Australian capitalism for eight decades, is fracturing as a result of “the ruling class’s fundamental inability to manage the contradictions tearing the social order apart: the combination of imperialist war, escalating austerity, a cost-of-living catastrophe, and the growing alienation of the working class from every institution of official political life.”

She explained that anti-protest laws, rushed through parliament under the pretext of combating “antisemitism” after the Bondi terror attack in December, were in fact “being built as a permanent apparatus of repression, to be used against the working class when the inevitable social revolt against war and austerity erupts.”

Crisp noted that opposition to war, as well as anger over declining living standards and Labor’s harsh budget were growing, and workers are already entering into struggles. But “opposition without a political perspective, without an understanding of what this system is and why it produces these outcomes and without an independent political organisation of the working class,” is a dead end.

Instead, she explained, what is required is the perspective of internationalism, upon which the Fourth International was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938: “To stop the war requires the mobilisation of the working class as an independent political force, in a direct fight against the Labor government, in conscious solidarity with workers in the United States, Iran, Israel, Britain, Europe—across every national boundary that the ruling class has erected to divide them.”

The reports were followed by a lively discussion session, in which attendees’ questions focused on the critical question of how to take forward the fight for this perspective in the working class.



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