

# Workers and youth oppose Iran war and Labor's austerity measures at meetings in Australia and NZ

Our reporters

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Over recent weeks, the Socialist Equality Party in Australia and the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand have held public meetings opposing the Iran war and warning that it is the sharpest expression of capitalism's descent into a new global conflict.

The last of the meetings will be held this Saturday in Newcastle and online at 1 p.m., following events in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney, as well as Wellington in New Zealand. Register now to attend the final meeting.

Speakers at the meetings have placed the war in its broader historical and international context, and have elaborated a socialist and revolutionary perspective for the working class to halt it.

The meetings have drawn out the intrinsic connection between the support of the Australian and NZ governments for the war, and an austerity offensive they are waging against the working class. A full report is available [here](#).

**Henry**, a university student from Adelaide, attended the Melbourne meeting online.

"As always, I'm impressed with the truth telling about Australia's political and geopolitical affairs, as an active player in war, and the objective geopolitical forces impacting Australia," he said.

"The speakers warned of the drive of imperialism, especially with the unprovoked attack on Iran, which risks an escalation to a new world war. This could be between the US and its rival China.

"Whilst there is war abroad, there is repression at home," he added. "The cost-of-living crisis and the slashing of disability funding are examples of this repression in Australia, disproportionately affecting the working class and underprivileged.

"I particularly enjoyed the consciousness-raising on Labor as a capitalist party, and the unfortunate shortfalls of confining left politics to electoral participation and protesting. This was shown by the SEP to be a redundant position, without a program of rank-and-file organisation of the working class which the SEP is exclusively offering.

"This attempt to pressure the Labor Party to a more left

position is on the terms of big-business exploiters, not workers. Without prioritising the organising power of the working class, we are already on the back foot politically speaking."

**Maureen**, a retired hairdresser, came to the event after meeting the SEP through its campaign against the Victorian Labor government's demolition of 44 public housing towers, an assault on the most vulnerable sections of the working class being carried out in the interests of property developers.

She said she found the meeting informative about the "impact on the economy in countries all over the world, and just how serious this is."

Maureen said she had struggled to keep up with global events, but the meeting helped her understand "what was filtering through." She recounted the discussion on how to get youth interested in socialist politics, saying: "It was very interesting that young people should start to understand more about history themselves and get involved.

"Young people are the ones that will be recruited if there's a war, 16- to 28-year-olds, to go on the front line. It's horrendous to think about."

The meeting had exposed the tacit support of the union bureaucracy for the war, as well as for Labor's austerity budget last month. Maureen responded: "The unions are not actually helping the people. This is quite disturbing that we don't have the unions on our side which once fought for the people and fought for their rights and were their allies.

"It's important that we understand what's going on for the young people as well, and for the working class, to be able to fight for the rights and fight for the freedom and against the dictators, which is a frightening word, but that's exactly what's happening."

La Trobe University student **Jake** said: "The US is a country that only seems to survive through perpetual war, which they justify through their relentless propaganda in movies, music, social media and education systems, to name a few. It goes without saying that many are needlessly being murdered and suffering to benefit a select few.

"Once the US have extracted what they need from Iran, they will suddenly announce a new threat from another country that

has more resources of value to them.”

“The cost of living is going to get worse,” Jake added. “We are already seeing far-reaching consequences, such as cuts to the NDIS [National Disability Insurance Scheme] and a convenient allocation of billions of dollars to the military. The aforementioned US media empire will ensure that minorities, leftists, immigrants, etc., are blamed.”

On the Labor government’s participation in the war, as well as its support for the Israeli mass slaughter of Palestinians, Jake said: “This should be an eye-opener for everyone to see where our government’s values lie, they would happily partake in genocide, directly or indirectly, to ensure that the imperialist capitalist regime continues to spread throughout the world.”

“What stood out to me from the speakers, which I share, is an optimism that conditions are now developing internationally for a revolution,” Jake said. “We are seeing organised protests and push-backs against these far-right-leaning governments. But passion and anger without direction can be exploited ... We need to remember what the fight is against: capitalism, imperialism, the oligarchy, not identity politics.”

A **Chinese international student** said: “I received information about global incidents, the resources market, and resources security which are impacted by the Iran war,” she said. “The US revealed their true stance. Their true purpose is not to help global peace. They don’t care about other countries and other countries’ people, especially in the undeveloped world.”

**Abdi**, a student at Western Sydney University, said the meeting was “very informative.”

What struck him the most was “the analysis of imperialism trying to save itself” —that the major powers, with America in the lead, facing economic crisis, are resorting to war. He noted that China’s rise was the key threat, “hence America demanding smaller countries in the region to cut ties with it.”

On the question of socialism uniting workers against war and capitalism, Abdi said: “It’s a pretty smart thing. It unites people on a shared identity; it doesn’t divide them by ethnic background or gender—it’s about building a collective of workers.

“Workers should unite to fight. Workers are oppressed, but without them, the capitalists have no wealth.”

**Roy**, a student at the University of New South Wales, noted Labor’s role in the war, and said: “You can’t rely on the Labor Party to be a force of good for the working class any more than you can rely on the US military to be a force of good in foreign countries.”

He expressed appreciation for a detailed review of Labor’s pro-imperialist record spanning more than a century, by SEP National Secretary Cheryl Crisp. It had underscored for Roy the reality that “the Labor Party were never socialists.”

On socialism, Roy said: “I think it’s the ideal to strive for. Our society is still based on this kind of hierarchy, top-down model. As much as mainstream education tries to have us

believe, we’re not truly democratic as long as there are those above us that can just make these sweeping decisions without our interests at heart.”

“Transferring that ownership and democratising it” was a “basic principle.”

Roy closed with a message to workers and young people: “The time for escapism, the time for continuing to trust institutions and systems—that time is over. The time to believe that things are somehow just gonna go away is totally over. That illusion should be shattered if it hasn’t already been.” His call was for action: “Workers and young people should fight. If there’s anything you shouldn’t do, it’s stay huddled up and paralyzed and not do anything.”

At the New Zealand meeting, **Hayley**, a recent immigrant from the US, told the WSWs she agreed that trying to reform the capitalist system “is not going to cut it. We need a complete breakdown of what’s currently here, and rebuild it from the ground up, if we’re going to have equality for everyone, wealth for everyone.”

Asked what she thought of the Democratic Party, Hayley said: “Their pockets are being filled by the same people” who are funding the Republicans. She noted that 2024 presidential candidate Kamala Harris was in favour of continuing the genocide against Gaza. “It was very similar to the election we had with Trump versus Hillary Clinton [in 2016] ... both sides are terrible.

“No matter what country you go to, there are the common people and then there’s the wealthy,” she said. People should unite in a struggle against inequality “instead of all these other things that are just distractions: your eyes are different, your nose is different, you believe in a different religion, things like that.”

**Calvin**, an asbestos removal worker, also originally from the US, said the meeting was “very interesting” and aligned with many of his views. He said the war with Iran was aimed at stealing its resources, which was “only helping the companies that profit off everyone else’s labour.” Calvin also denounced the Trump administration’s assault on immigrants. “I am from the southern United States, all of my friends are Latin American people. I fear for their safety.” He said, “I think it would be good to have a revolution, that’s what I’ve been really feeling the need for.”



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