

Oppose Labor's NDIS cuts: Defend disabled people, fight austerity and war!

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) calls for the entire working class to oppose and politically mobilise against the Albanese Labor government's massive assault on disabled people, which is an attack on the most vulnerable and sets a new benchmark for vicious government austerity.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Amendment Bill 2026 seeks to strip \$38 billion over four years from the NDIS, the country's principal disability support program. It is the largest single cut to a government social program in Australian history and the centrepiece of a May budget that slashes \$63.8 billion from social spending.

Never before has an Australian government so nakedly sought to remove hundreds of thousands of people from a major national social program. Of the more than 750,000 disabled people receiving NDIS support, government modelling points to the removal of more than 240,000 existing participants by 2031, while a further 110,000 will be denied access altogether. The bill represents the opening stage of a broader offensive against the social rights of the entire working class.

The main targets are disabled children. Almost two-thirds of those Labor intends to remove from the scheme are under the age of 18. They are to be forced into so-called foundational supports such as Thriving Kids, a limited program that does not yet exist, while those still on the NDIS will face sweeping reductions to assistance on which they depend.

The consequences will be devastating. Families will be forced to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket for care and therapy, or to abandon their own jobs, as the government dumps the cost and burden of providing support onto them. Underfunded hospitals and deteriorating schools will be inundated with those thrown off the scheme. Teachers, healthcare and support workers will face the impossible task of filling the gap.

There is no question that the Labour government's plans will cost lives and already have. Disabled people will be denied essential care, families will be pushed beyond breaking point, and preventable deaths will become an

inevitable consequence.

What is driving this onslaught is the deepest crisis of capitalism since the Great Depression. Labor's attack on the NDIS is part of a global offensive on the social rights of the working class. Across the world, governments are slashing healthcare, education and welfare services to boost the profits of the super wealthy and divert tens of billions into militarism and war.

The US-Israeli war on Iran, Lebanon and Gaza, the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the accelerating confrontation with China—the opening shots of World War III—mark a new stage in the imperialist redivision of the world. War abroad means war against the working class at home—on all of its fundamental social and democratic rights. The Albanese government has unreservedly backed US imperialism's criminal wars and directly integrated Australia into US plans for war against China, in particular through the \$368 billion AUKUS nuclear submarine program.

The same budget that strips \$38 billion from disability support raises annual military spending to around \$60 billion and commits tens of billions more for future wars. Labor claims there is no money to maintain the NDIS as it is, while pouring a similar amount into the military each year. The issue is not the absence of wealth, but the class interests that determine how society's resources are allocated.

Since Labor took office in 2022, the living standards of working people have suffered their sharpest decline since the 1950s, while the wealth of Australia's richest 200 individuals has climbed to a record \$707 billion, \$39.45 billion in the past year alone, almost exactly the sum Labor intends to strip from the NDIS. Labor is not a party of the working class, but a party for the banks, giant corporations and the ultra-wealthy.

When the Gillard Labor government established the NDIS in 2013, it proclaimed that no Australian with a disability would be “left behind.” However, what it established was a private market wholly funded through the public purse, funnelling government money into private businesses. Labor

ensured the profit motive was baked into the design. The Productivity Commission that designed the scheme was explicit that the NDIS was to save the government money by replacing fragmented, chronically underfunded state-based services with a market that would supposedly drive down costs.

The opposite occurred. As the NDIS expanded, state and territory governments, Labor and Liberal alike, dismantled their remaining public disability services, forcing increasing numbers into the scheme. The NDIS exposed an enormous level of unmet need that decades of cuts had concealed. Expenditure far outstripped what the government had planned.

Now, without a shred of evidence, the government is vilifying the disabled, their families and service providers, falsely accusing them of “rorting” and declaring that hundreds of thousands, whose disabilities have been determined by professional clinicians, will be thrown off the scheme.

The SEP opposes these cuts. However, we do not defend the NDIS as the means for providing disability care. Labor is not abandoning the market model it created but simply stripping away funding by excluding participants, reducing supports and shifting the burden back onto disabled people and their families.

The media and political establishment as a whole supports privatised disability care and Labor’s insistence that the NDIS has to be “sustainable”—code for slashing funding. The Liberal-National Coalition openly supports the cuts to disability care and endorses the thrust of Labor’s legislation while quibbling on details.

The Greens function to direct the widespread public outrage and opposition back into the sordid parliamentary arena of manoeuvres and backroom wheeling and dealing. While nominally opposing the NDIS cuts, they struck a deal with the government to pass its tax measures in exchange for an extension of a toothless NDIS inquiry in the Senate. We can predict in advance that the Greens will be prepared to cut a deal to pass the legislation in exchange for Labor’s acceptance of a few of their cosmetic amendments. It is the well-worn path.

The trade union bureaucracy has suppressed any organised opposition to the assault. In fact, when the cuts were first announced, the Health Services Union hailed them as “an important step in the right direction.” The Australian Council of Trade Unions likewise accepted the government’s cost-cutting framework, requesting only consultation. Not a single union called for the legislation to be defeated or opposed the multi-billion dollar cutbacks.

Insofar as they have anything to say about the NDIS, Socialist Alternative and other pseudo-left groups “oppose”

the legislation and the cuts but are uncritical of the privatisation of disability care. Their perspective is to promote protests, marches and petitions in collaboration with the Greens to pressure the very Labor government carrying out the attack on the disabled. They are silent on the criminal role of the trade unions.

The Socialist Equality Party advances the following demands:

- Withdraw the NDIS Amendment Bill. Reinstate every participant removed from the scheme and restore every funding cut.
- Redirect the billions squandered on war and the military to disability care, health, education and other essential social services. Place disability and health services under public ownership and democratic workers control, organised according to social need, not private profit.

These demands cannot be realised through appeals to Labor, the Liberal-National Coalition, the Greens or the trade union apparatus. They require the independent political mobilisation of the working class against the capitalist system itself.

The Health Workers Rank-and-File Committee has already taken up this fight, adopting a resolution against the NDIS cuts and beginning to mobilise health workers. Disabled people, their families, workers in disability, health, education and every industry should follow its example, establishing rank-and-file committees independent of the trade union bureaucracy and every capitalist party.

The working class as a whole must come to the defence of one of the most vulnerable layers of the population. If the ruling class can strip essential support from the disabled in order to finance war and corporate profit, it will stop at nothing. Every social right from healthcare, and education to pensions and wages, is in its sights.

Independent rank-and-file committees are needed to unite workers across workplaces and industries, as part of a broader movement to defend the all of basic rights of working people and against intensifying austerity and war on the basis of a socialist perspective. The decisive task is to build the Socialist Equality Party as the revolutionary leadership of that movement.



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