

SEP (Australia) holds eighth national Congress

Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
5 October 2026

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia) held its eighth biannual national Congress from September 26–29, adopting five resolutions that outline a socialist and internationalist perspective on the key issues facing the working class and reelecting a leadership to spearhead the fight for that program.

The Congress was a thoroughly international event. It was held amid a series of Congresses convened by sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), and was based upon, and part of, the elaboration of a revolutionary strategy by the world Trotskyist movement, in response to an unprecedented crisis of global capitalism.

The intensive four-day discussion was enriched by the participation of leading members of the ICFI, with greetings delivered from the Socialist Equality Parties of the US, the UK, Germany, Sri Lanka, Turkey and the newly-founded Canadian SEP, as well as from the supporting Socialist Equality Groups of Brazil and New Zealand.

There was a high-level of engagement and participation, including from new members of the SEP. Among them were several industrial workers, who spoke about developing the party's intervention into key sections of the working class, as well as young people who have become active through the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the SEP's youth movement.

In a detailed opening report, SEP National Secretary Cheryl Crisp placed the Congress within its international and historical context.

"We meet at a moment in history when the crisis of world capitalism has entered a new and incomparably more dangerous stage," Crisp stated.

"A new world war is not a future danger but a present-day reality, metastasising across the globe, with multiple fronts already ablaze, posing the threat of a nuclear catastrophe. Political commentators and journalists are acknowledging this prospect, asking what was once the unthinkable: are we already in WWII?"

The utterly criminal US-led war against Iran, fully supported by the Australian Labor government, marked a qualitative turning point. Crisp explained that it was the culmination of a 35-year period opened up by the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The response of American imperialism, of waging continuous wars in a bid to offset its economic decline, was transforming into a global confrontation, above all targeting Russia and China.

Crisp detailed the reality that all of the imperialist powers are participating in this new redivision of the world, through the biggest armament programs in history, and traced its root to the underlying contradictions of capitalism, expressed in the contradiction between a vast technological development and a slump in productive investments.

The program of the ruling elite and all its political representatives was bringing them into collision with the working class. Crisp pointed to a political radicalisation of workers and young people all over the world, expressed in an upsurge of industrial action, widespread hostility to the genocide in Gaza and to war and a growing attraction among workers and youth to socialism.

All of this was a confirmation of the perspective published by the ICFI at the beginning of the decade, which labelled the 2020s as a "decade of socialist revolution." That was not a promissory note, Crisp emphasised, but a scientific assessment that a sharp shift in the situation had occurred, ushering in a period of shocks and upheavals. Since then, the world had been wracked by such upheavals, from the COVID pandemic, to the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine and the assault on Iran and the massive social and cost-of-living crisis confronting workers the world over.

The nostrums of Australian exceptionalism, depicting it as a "lucky country" exempt from the storms of global politics, had been thoroughly refuted. The Labor government, Crisp stated, was an active participant in the unfolding global war, and was carrying out a massive assault on the social and democratic rights of the working class. It was doing so under conditions of an accelerating crisis of the two-party system, which has lost any stable mass base of support.

In that context, Crisp provided a detailed outline of the decisive role of Labor as the chief party of bourgeois rule throughout Australian history. She recalled Lenin's scathing 1920 characterisation of Labor as a "an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists systematically to dupe the workers," and traced its role in presiding over the key political turning points, including the World Wars and the offensive against the working class launched by the Hawke and Keating governments. The crisis of Labor was thus a crisis of capitalist rule with vast implications.

"But objective conditions do not, of themselves, produce socialist consciousness, and a radicalised working class does not, of itself, find its way to power." The decisive issue was the active intervention of the party, providing the working class with a socialist perspective, based on the Trotskyist movement's decades-long defence of socialist internationalism against every form of national-opportunism.

The first resolution adopted by the Congress, "Socialism and the fight against war," was introduced by longstanding SEP leader Peter Symonds.

The resolution, and Symonds remarks, placed a vast militarisation in the Indo-Pacific, within the context of global war. The resolution warns: "While the US and its allies have not yet launched a military assault on China, it is already the indirect target of the wars underway and the central target of the global trade war of the Trump

administration. Within the Indo-Pacific region, all the conditions have been created for a devastating war that would eclipse the horrors of the two world wars and threaten the very future of humanity.”

The resolution detailed the Labor government’s role in completing Australia’s transformation into a staging base for such a war, including through the largest build-up of its own military since World War II and an unprecedented expansion of US basing arrangements. Labor’s active support for the Gaza genocide, the war against Iran and the US-NATO conflict with Russia, as well as its repression of anti-war sentiment, were inseparable from its commitment to war with China.

The concluding section of the resolution outlined the political basis for the building of an anti-war movement of the working class. It rejected the protest politics of the pseudo-left, as well as their false and politically reactionary designation of Russia and China as imperialist powers, emphasising that war could not be opposed on a single-issue basis but posed as an urgent necessity the abolition of capitalism.

The second resolution, introduced by SEP national committee member Oscar Grenfell, detailed the crisis of the Australian two-party system.

It made an extensive analysis of the historical role of the Labor Party, and of the implications of the rapid rise of the far-right One Nation party. Its emergence to prominence did not signify a shift to the right among working people. Instead, One Nation had been actively promoted by sections of the ruling elite, as a battering ram against the working class. And it had been able to capitalise on widespread social discontent caused by the pro-business policies of Labor and the corporatised trade union bureaucracy.

The resolution opposed and exposed the line of pseudo-left groups which simultaneously blame the working class for the rise of One Nation, and invoke its rise to justify their promotion of the very forces responsible, including Labor, the unions and the Greens. It emphasised that under conditions of a sharp shift in the situation, the political crisis will be determined substantially by the intervention of the SEP into the working class.

That was the topic of the third resolution, introduced by SEP Assistant National-Secretary Max Boddy. The resolution documented the fact that Australia is experiencing the highest levels of industrial action since 2013, as part of a broader upsurge in the region and internationally, something that is systematically blacked out by the corporate media.

The resolution reviewed some of the key experiences of those struggles, including the Victorian teachers dispute. Along with several other struggles, it made clear that the working class is entering into struggle with the Labor and union bureaucracies that have suppressed opposition for decades.

But the resolution emphasised that such struggles could only go forward, if they were provided with a new political and organisational leadership. That is the significance of the International Workers’ Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, initiated by the ICFI. Its aim is to coordinate the establishment of rank-and-file committees by workers in every country and sector, in a rebellion against the old bureaucracies, and to connect that fight to a socialist perspective.

The fourth resolution spotlighted the case of Bogdan Syrotiuk, the young Trotskyist leader sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in Ukraine last August. Introducing it, longstanding National Committee member Mike Head exposed the frame-up character of that conviction, which is based solely on articles he wrote for the WSWs,

calling for the unity of Ukrainian and Russian workers, against all the governments involved, and against the war.

The resolution warned that the prosecution of Syrotiuk is nothing less than an attempt to criminalise socialist internationalism, and commits to the fight for his freedom as an indispensable component of the defence of democratic rights globally.

The Congress adopted as its own the resolution passed by the US SEP on the role and implications of AI. Introducing it, Evrim Yazgin, an SEP National Committee member and leader of the IYSSE, explained the contradictory character of the new technology. It represented an immense advance in humanity’s potential capacities, but as with all such developments, it will be used under capitalism to intensify war, repression and exploitation.

This posed the critical issue of which class controls AI. Yazgin highlighted the significance of the ICFI’s creative appropriation of the new technology, through the establishment of Socialism AI, to educate the working class in socialist politics.

There was lively discussion on all of the resolutions, with delegates speaking on the various themes and suggesting several additions, before they were adopted unanimously.

The Congress elected a new National Committee, which comprises a cross-section of the party membership. The NC includes founding members such as Crisp, other decades-long leaders, those who were won to Trotskyism over the following years and a growing layer of younger members, who are taking up new political and organisational responsibilities.

Crisp was reelected as National Secretary with Max Boddy as Assistant National-Secretary. Longstanding national editor Peter Symonds was joined by Oscar Grenfell as a co-editor.

In her concluding remarks, Crisp emphasised the necessity to take the perspective and program that had been discussed at the Congress out into the working class as broadly as possible. The party was preparing a number of ambitious interventions, all of which were aimed at the development of socialist consciousness and the recruitment of workers and young people to the perspective of a revolutionary transformation of society.



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