

“They’re not focused on us. They focus on war”—Victorian workers and youth speak on election

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party (SEP) candidates and campaigners have won a warm response to the announcement that the party is contesting the November 28 Victorian election. The SEP is the only party providing a socialist perspective against war, austerity and authoritarianism in the election.

SEP candidates Morgan Peach and Peter Byrne have joined campaign teams across the Northern Metropolitan region where they are standing for the Upper House. They explained to workers and young people in the diverse working-class communities in Melbourne’s north that the cost-of-living crisis affecting workers is intimately connected to the global war underway.

The federal Labor government of Anthony Albanese is a central participant in the US-led preparations for a third world war. Labor has committed hundreds of billions of dollars to the AUKUS nuclear submarine program, is completing Australia’s transformation into a forward staging base in US-led war plans against China, and has backed the genocide in Gaza, the criminal US-Israeli war on Iran and the NATO proxy war against Russia. Every dollar poured into the military is a dollar that must be cut from health, education, housing and wages.

They also exposed the central responsibility of state and federal Labor governments, working with the union apparatuses, in enforcing the assault on workers’ living standards over decades.

The Victorian Labor government’s latest budget deepens cuts to public education, health and disability services while it slashed more than 1,000 public sector jobs. This is part of an international offensive on the working class most sharply expressed in Australia in

the Albanese government’s savaging of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, ending any support for hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable in a ruthless attack that will claim lives.

Workers and youth were interested in the SEP’s election launch meeting this Sunday, which will raise these fundamental issues that are being suppressed by every other party and outline an independent perspective for the working class. Details of the launch are here.

Sawa is a 17-year-old Technical and Further Education (TAFE) student who wants to become a carpenter. He spoke to SEP candidate Peter Byrne in the suburb Broadmeadows.

Sawa opposed war, saying: “I think that it affects all of us, because our gas prices are going up, the fuel prices are absurd. I hate it. I don’t like it. The more they go on with this, it’s going to affect us 10 times more, and it will involve us into the war as well. It’s going to start a big war involving every country. They’re just taking our money and using it for other stuff. They’re not focused on us. They focus on war.”

Asked about the ongoing genocide in Gaza, Sawa said: “I think it’s upsetting. Innocent people are dying for no reason at all. They’re just trying to eliminate people so they can get a part of their country and expand.”

The student also opposed the anti-immigrant policies of the far-right party One Nation, as well as Labor and the Coalition, all of which are scapegoating “foreigners” for the social crisis caused by their pro-business agenda. “I think it’s better that we have more people. We need people in trades, hands-on skills,” Sawa said.

Afrah, who works in aged care said: “I will not be voting Labor as I have since I was 18 and since I started voting 40 years ago. There’s not enough help for the people. They’re not doing enough to help with the cost of living. He’s [Labor premier Ben Carroll’s] not doing enough to help with those struggling families.

“I have five kids, two still living at home because they can’t afford to live on their own, one’s 21, the other one’s 24. Buying a house is impossible.”

“I’m a migrant. I’ve come from a war-torn country. I come from Lebanon. I’ve been here since I was five. I don’t agree with what’s happening in the Middle East but there’s nothing I can say or do that’s going to change it.”

Byrne raised that the SEP is fighting to build an international anti-war movement of the working class. He emphasised that workers have the power to halt war but only if they are organised independently of the pro-war parties and union bureaucracies and mobilise on a socialist program against the source of conflict, the capitalist system.

Administrative worker **Sarah** said: “I believe it’s quite heated at the moment with the change of premier, getting Jacinta Allan out to get Ben Carroll in, when Carroll is quite far right. He aligns closely with the Liberals. I’m not one to vote for the big parties, but it’s just made it easier this time around to actually not vote for them at all and put them last because we can’t afford to have this government in again. They’re slashing too many jobs in the public service. We can’t get Medicare because we don’t have the people in the back office.”

“It’s quite scary to think about what Australia will turn into if One Nation gets up into government. I’m worried for all of my friends, even my partner who was born overseas. I’m worried for his family. The amount of hate that I’m already seeing.”

Sarah spoke against the pro-Zionist political and media campaign targeting anti-genocide protests which has been spearheaded by Labor federally and in Victoria.

“I’ve had to defend the rallies for Palestine in conversations I’ve had. We just want peace. A lot of people don’t get that and aren’t educated on it, because of the media lies.”

Sonia and her husband have two young children. Sonia migrated from India more than 10 years ago and works as an accountant.

“All the politicians are diverting the attention of the people from the real problems, like where the attention is due and where the work needs to be done,” Sonia said. “They are just blaming immigrants for all the problems. They don’t realise what immigrants actually bring into the country. They put in their efforts, their money, their time, everything, and they contribute to the actual economy. They don’t really get any benefits when they come in, so they have to earn all of those things by following the laws and all the regulations of the country.

“Their attention should be on improving the infrastructure, improving affordability and getting better facilities in the hospitals and schools.

“Living costs are getting really out of hand. Me and my husband are not on minimum wages, but having a family and just getting groceries, paying the mortgage is becoming hard. Whatever comes in goes straight out. Look at groceries, if I think about the last five years prices have doubled or even more than doubled. Like every person living in Australia, we are really struggling.”

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