Australia: Meeting launches SEP's socialist, anti-war campaign in Victorian election

Our reporters
4 November 2026

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) launched its campaign for the November 28 Victorian state election at a public meeting on Sunday, November 1, in Wollert, in Melbourne's outer north. The SEP is standing Morgan Peach and Peter Byrne in the Northern Metropolitan upper house region.

Workers and young people attended in person and online.

Opening the meeting, chair and SEP member Evrim Yazgin explained that the Victorian election was an expression of a deepening international political crisis. Elections around the world were becoming focal points of instability, amid the breakdown of traditional parties, the growth of the far right and the turn towards authoritarian rule.

"The two parties that have governed Victoria for generations share barely half the vote. This is the product of broad hostility to the main parties of bourgeois rule—above all to Labor, which has governed this state for 33 of the past 44 years."

Addressing the rise of the far-right One Nation, Yazgin said: "Primary responsibility lies with Labor and the trade unions. They have created the conditions of social misery on which One Nation feeds—decades of falling real wages, unaffordable housing, privatisation, and the degradation of health and education, all enforced by the union bureaucracies."

Rejecting the claim that workers must support Labor as a lesser evil, Yazgin warned that whichever party formed government, the corporate elite was demanding a major escalation of austerity to pay down Victoria's debt.

He explained that the SEP was standing to expose the agenda of the ruling elite and build an independent political movement of the working class against war and austerity, as part of the international struggle for socialism waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI).

Byrne detailed the attacks on jobs, wages and public services already imposed by successive Victorian Labor governments and warned that far deeper austerity was being prepared, regardless of the election outcome.

Labor has presided over a deepening housing crisis, deteriorating hospitals and schools, public-sector wage restraint and cuts to essential services. It is proceeding with the demolition of Melbourne's 44 public housing towers while preparing further spending cuts and job losses.

Nationally, the federal Labor government is seeking tens of billions of dollars in cuts to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), threatening essential support for hundreds of thousands of disabled people.

With Victoria's debt forecast to approach $200 billion by the decade's end, Byrne pointed to an open letter from more than 100 business executives, investors and other prominent figures demanding that every party produce a plan to reduce the debt.

"The letter is nothing less than the ruling elite openly setting the agenda for the next government."

Byrne highlighted the struggle of Victorian public school educators against declining real wages, intolerable workloads and chronic understaffing.

Tens of thousands of teachers and school staff struck twice this year and rejected two agreements negotiated between the Australian Education Union (AEU) and Labor. The union bureaucracy isolated the dispute and pushed through a fundamentally unchanged third agreement in September, entrenching further real wage cuts and excessive workloads.

Byrne characterised the strikes and rejection votes as "an incipient rebellion against the union bureaucracy, revealing immense opposition and the potential for a broader struggle against Labor's austerity agenda.

"The teachers did not lack the strength or determination to fight. What was lacking were the independent organisations through which they could take control of their struggle, break its isolation and develop a broader offensive against Labor."

He called for rank-and-file committees, independent of the unions, to link educators with parents, students, healthcare workers and other sections of the working class in a united struggle. Such committees had to be developed internationally as part of the fight for a workers' government and socialism.

Giving the main report, Peach placed the Victorian election within the international breakdown of capitalism and the escalating danger of a third world war.

From the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine to the genocide in Gaza, the US-Israeli war on Iran and preparations for conflict with China, the major powers were plunging humanity towards a catastrophic global conflagration.

Peach explained that the federal Labor government was transforming Australia into a staging ground for US-led war against China through AUKUS, expanded American military bases and the integration of Australian forces into US war plans.

"This reality, however, is being suppressed in this election by every other party because they are all pro-war and support the military build-up of Australia and its alliance with US

© World Socialist Web Site

imperialism."

The Victorian Labor government was directly involved. Its Defence Vision declared the state a "global defence and national security powerhouse," promoting the expansion of military industries.

Peach explained that the enormous resources devoted to militarism and corporate profit were being extracted from workers through attacks on wages, social services and living standards.

He pointed to the emergence of mass struggles internationally against war, austerity and authoritarianism.

France had become an epicentre of this movement, with protests by students and young people against education cuts, police repression and militarism drawing broader layers of workers into struggle. Similar opposition was developing across Europe, including protests against military conscription in Germany.

"The very same explosive social charges driving masses into struggle across Europe and internationally—government assaults on education, healthcare, and housing, the expansion of military spending, the skyrocketing cost-of-living—these same issues exist here in Victoria."

Peach explained that the decisive question was the political perspective and leadership of these struggles.

In France, the trade union bureaucracies and pseudo-left organisations were seeking to contain the movement within the existing political framework. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the pseudo-left France Unbowed party, was promoting his election as president and reforms under a capitalist government as the answer to the upheaval.

Peach drew a parallel with the pseudo-left Victorian Socialists (VS). Amid widespread hostility to Labor and the Coalition, VS was seeking to channel growing anti-capitalist sentiment back behind the parliamentary establishment that was lurching towards war, austerity and authoritarianism.

The program of VS has nothing to do with socialism. It accepts the private ownership of the banks and major corporations, while promoting the fraud that a "better, fairer Victoria" can be achieved through the capitalist parliament, whose major parties are all committed to escalating austerity and attacks on the working class.

This expresses its orientation towards privileged middle-class layers seeking influence within the existing political order, rather than its revolutionary overthrow.

The issue was not whether socialists should contest elections. The SEP was itself standing candidates, but to build an independent movement of the working class against capitalism and the parliamentary institutions that defend it, rather than fostering illusions that those institutions could be pressured into serving workers' interests.

Peach insisted: "Today's crisis cannot be resolved without placing the banks and corporations under the democratic ownership of workers, the expropriation of the enormous wealth hoarded by the financial elite, and the allocation of those resources on the basis of social needs, not the profits of a tiny minority.

"These are revolutionary questions posed by the objective situation itself. But they will not be solved spontaneously. They depend on what we do. Support and take part in our election campaign. Build rank-and-file committees in your workplace, your school, your community. Study the history of the class struggle and the Marxist movement. But above all, make the most important decision of your life and join the Socialist Equality Party."

Afterwards, several attendees spoke with SEP members.

Stuart, a technician, described the meeting as being "about being against war and building a party for the workers, by the workers.

"A lot of people have been frightened against that 'bad word' socialism for so very long in society. … But it just needs to be in today's language."

Jack, a 29-year-old transport and logistics worker, said the danger of world war was the most pressing issue confronting humanity.

"I think there is no other issue at the moment, that is as pressing and crucial as the threat of a third world war," he said. "It dwarfs everything else in comparison. Specifically nuclear war, if it did escalate to that. The Australian government is shamefully going along with the aims of US imperialism, gearing up for war with China, gearing up for war with Russia, and risking all of our lives in the process."

Jack also pointed to the economic consequences of militarism.

"All the money that's being spent on militarism and gearing up for war is money that could be spent improving the lives and living standards of everyone in society."

Noran, a dental student, expressed concern about the impact of war on working people.

"Workers are the ones that are more affected—the poor compared with the rich. They can feel it on their daily basis. So once there is a war, you have to know that most of the burden will be on the workers' lives and maybe the rich ones will be just gaining some more business, more profits."

Rejecting claims that austerity was necessary to address government debt, she said: "Both Labor and One Nations are two faces for the same coin. They are announcing we are doing this for the debt, but it's for a future plan of expanding military activities."

Noran welcomed the SEP's campaign: "People have to know more about this campaign as much as we can."

Authorised by Cheryl Crisp for the Socialist Equality Party, Level 1/457-459 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010, Australia.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site