

Socialist Equality Party (Australia) completes campaign to win 1,500 electoral members

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26 September 2024

On Monday, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) completed its campaign to win 1,500 new electoral members and submitted an application for official party registration to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC).

The campaign has revealed a growing constituency of workers and young people seeking a genuine political alternative to the capitalist programs of Labor, Liberal, and the Greens, which all defend Australian and international imperialism.

More than 1,000 new members have joined the SEP's existing 500 electoral members, based on its socialist, internationalist, and anti-war program. Many of these members have confirmed their support multiple times.

Nonetheless, the AEC will now engage in a four-month assessment process, which includes calling and emailing members to scrutinise their membership. If the SEP is successful in this process, it will once again be able to appear on the ballot paper under its own name at the next federal election.

The campaign to treble the SEP's electoral membership was necessitated by anti-democratic legislation rushed through parliament in 2021 by the then Liberal-National government with the wholehearted support of Labor. Under the laws, political parties were stripped of their registration unless they could demonstrate membership of at least 1,500, up from the previous requirement of 500.

Parties with parliamentary representation are exempt from such requirements.

The smaller "third party" organisations were given three months to complete this task, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included lockdowns, making street campaigning irresponsible, reckless and, at times, illegal. This was a transparent attempt by the major establishment parties to prevent any alternative

perspective from being presented in federal elections.

There was concern in ruling circles that the deep dissatisfaction among broad sections of the population with the bipartisan pro-business offensive, dismantling of COVID safety measures, commitment to US-led wars and cuts to wages and social programs would find conscious electoral expression.

This process has accelerated since the coming to power of the Albanese Labor government in May 2022, when it scraped into office, its primary vote falling to a near-record low of less than 33 percent. Its "Plan for a Better Future" has turned into the opposite—war and austerity against the working class.

Labor has intensified its commitment to US-led wars, with billions being allocated for the AUKUS military pact, transforming the continent into a staging ground for war against China. Working-class families are bearing the brunt of this cost through massive cuts to public health, education and basic social services.

Hundreds of thousands of young people, workers and professionals have been shocked and appalled by Labor's strident and bloodthirsty support for the genocide in Gaza.

This brutal assault is part of a broader imperialist agenda. While already embroiled in the war against Russia in Ukraine, the US and its allies are escalating conflict across the Middle East and rapidly advancing preparations for war against China. In its reckless drive to maintain global dominance, US imperialism is pushing humanity toward a catastrophic third world war, one that could involve nuclear-armed powers.

Since March 7, SEP members and supporters have campaigned for more than six months to sign up new electoral members. Many were won at the anti-war, anti-genocide protests held weekly for more than 11 months across the country, while others were met in working-

class suburbs of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Newcastle, as well as on university campuses and social media.

SEP campaigners explained that the crisis of world capitalism that has produced the descent into barbarism has also created the conditions for a global movement against capitalism. One expression of this is the millions of workers and young people who have opposed and protested Israel's genocide.

Imperialist governments have dismissed these protests with disdain. Appeals and pleas to the very governments that fund, supply and support the wars is a futile and barren perspective, spearheaded by the pseudo-left protest organisers and the Greens. They assert that, no matter what crime the Labor government supports, all that can be done is to protest each week. This is designed to demoralise and disorient those who oppose imperialist war.

The decline in numbers at the protests is the result. Far from listening to and acting on the aspirations and demands of the protesters, the Labor government has falsely labelled them as antisemitic in an attempt to close down the protests altogether. Journalists, artists, actors and academics opposing the slaughter are allowed to be repeatedly and openly targeted by Zionist lobby groups, risking the loss of their jobs and livelihoods.

Far-right groups attacked student encampments opposing the genocide after being incited by Albanese. Students involved in the encampments face disciplinary measures, threatening their future academic career, with the universities passing anti-democratic rules to prevent future student demonstrations.

The fact that Israel, with the support of US imperialism, has now embarked on a murderous war against Lebanon is proof that the genocide is part of a broader war drive in the Middle East and globally. Lebanon is being reduced to the conditions of Gaza—rubble.

The attack on democratic rights dovetails with the assault on the living and working conditions of the Australian working class. The unprecedented increase in military spending is being gouged from social funding for health, education, housing and infrastructure by state and federal governments, the majority of them Labor.

The trade union apparatuses have played a central

role in suppressing rising working-class unrest, including strikes and protests. Not one shipment supporting Israel's war effort has been so much as held up on the docks or in manufacturing, let alone stopped, in line with the broader suppression of mass opposition by workers to attacks on their wages and conditions.

The Labor government has, with bipartisan support, forced the construction division of the Construction, Forestry, and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) into administration—a quasi-dictatorship in which the state has virtually direct control over the union. Far from cleaning up alleged union corruption, this is designed to suppress broader wage struggles.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) was centrally involved in the operation, expelling the CFMEU and collaborating with Labor behind the scenes.

The critical question is the development of a political leadership within the working class, advancing a socialist perspective to end the capitalism system, the source of the crisis confronting humanity.

The SEP advanced that there is no national solution to this crisis and the campaign to regain ballot status is part of the International Committee of the Fourth International's broader fight for a unified global struggle against capitalism.

The success of the electoral membership campaign has revealed a growing layer of workers and young people seeking a socialist alternative to capitalism. However, as the SEP has stressed, there is no electoral road to socialism.

What is now urgently posed is the necessity to build the SEP as the leadership of the working class. Support for a revolutionary, socialist perspective is crucial, but such a perspective must be actively fought for to be successful. The next critical step is joining the SEP, the Australian section of the Fourth International, as a full member and taking forward the fight for world socialist revolution.



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