

Alliance Voices

Socialist Alliance Discussion Bulletin

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Note: The submission deadline for resolutions to the 2006 national conference is midnight, Friday October 20. Please email submissions to <national_office@socialist-alliance.org>.

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The content of articles published in Alliance Voices reflect the views of the author, not necessarily those of the Socialist Alliance.

You can make a difference

Come to the Socialist Alliance National Conference in Geelong, October 28-29

It is no exaggeration to say that Australia's political landscape would look pretty depressing if the Socialist Alliance didn't exist. Imagine Australian politics without:

- The work of Socialist Alliance members and our allies in the trade union movement: The overwhelming public opposition to Howard's anti-worker and union-busting laws would not have been mobilised in the massive nationwide protests over the last year – protests that undermined many bosses' confidence to rapidly impose the laws on workers. Together with other militants, Socialist Alliance has worked to ensure that the campaign against Work Choices is not just an ALP election campaign, but one that strengthens unions' ability to defend workers' rights – now and under a future ALP government.
- The nationwide protests against Liberal and Labor support for Israel's brutal wars on Lebanon and Palestine: The protests initiated across the country by the Middle East-Australian and Muslim communities were given wholehearted support by the Socialist Alliance, and Alliance activists in the peace movement continue to organise the public face of opposition to the occupation of Iraq and the destruction of our democratic freedoms that the "war on terror" is used to justify.
- Resistance to the religious right and the Howard government's banning of same-sex marriage: It was Socialist Alliance members in the gay and lesbian rights organisations who organised the public activities in many cities on last month's national day on action for equal marriage rights.
- And it is the Socialist Alliance that is taking the people-before-profits message directly into Premier Peter Beattie's own seat in the September 9 Queensland elections.

This campaigning puts left politics onto the national political stage, and makes a difference. It boosts people's confidence to take action to defend their rights. It raises the voice of dissent and gives millions of people hope with the knowledge that they are not alone in their hatred of war, racism and union bashing, and that organised resistance is possible, and happening.

None of this would be possible without the week-to-week work of individual Socialist Alliance members. Whether it is putting motions to workplace meetings, organising students on campuses and schools, distributing *Green Left Weekly* on the streets, holding film showings and forums in our communities, joining picket lines, organising fundraisers, contributing to *Seeing Red* magazine, setting up new branches of the Alliance - all that is vital to building resistance and raising the socialist alternative.

As the Howard government turns up its attacks on just about every section of the population and the Labor Party makes it clear that it will not resist (and indeed agrees with the Coalition on many issues), Socialist Alliance's role in Australian politics becomes more important.

Our 4th National Conference – to be held in Geelong Trades Hall on October 28-29 – will be a vital opportunity to review, learn from and strengthen the resistance to Howard that we have helped build, and to plan the next steps in creating a fighting alternative to the ALP.

Come along - your participation will make a difference. Individually we can all do our bit, but together we are much stronger and can achieve much, much more. We look forward to seeing you in Geelong.

In solidarity and struggle,

Craig Johnston, Sam Watson, Lisa Macdonald

Draft SA national conference agenda

Socialist Alliance: Building a fighting alternative

SUNDAY, October 29 @ Geelong Trades Hall

9-9.30am Conference welcome, procedures, agenda adoption

9.30-11am: Australian politics today and the role of the Socialist Alliance

9.30-10.00am A panel comprised of a speaker and "respondents".

10.00-10.40am Plenary discussion (including around any amendments to NE resolution and other pre-submitted resolutions on Australian politics).

10.40-10.45am Voting on the NE resolution and other resolutions on Australian politics.

10.45-11am Greetings

11-11.10am Morning break

11.10am–1.00pm Fighting back: building the campaigns

11.10-11.30am Brief presentation on the centrality of the industrial relations campaign in our struggle against neo-liberalism and war, including any resolutions from the Saturday trade union activists' workshop for endorsement by SA.

11.20am-1pm Workshops, including on:

- (i) The IR campaign and the November 30 national day of action
- (ii) From G20 to "Stop Bush 2007"
- (iii) Civil liberties and Islamophobia
- (vi) Stop deaths in custody
- (iv) No nukes and the ALP national conference
- (vi) Ending the ban on same-sex marriage
- (v) Venezuela solidarity

A "scribe" in each workshop will document the discussion and outcomes for publication in *Alliance Voices* after the conference.

1.00-2.00pm Lunch break

2.00-3.20pm Building the Socialist Alliance

2-2.20pm Introductory panel on building the Socialist Alliance over the last year, including a power-point presentation reflecting different branch/campaigning experiences.

2.20-3.30pm Workshops to share ideas about how to build SA in different contexts, include some skills training, on:

- (i) Building branches in regional areas
- (ii) Election campaigning
- (iii) SA fundraising and finances
- (iv) Using the Internet (websites, blogs, etc)
- (v) Writing for *Green Left Weekly*
- (vi) *Seeing Red* magazine

3.30-3.45pm

Voting on SA building-related resolutions

3.45-4pm Afternoon break

4-4.20pm Constitution changes report, discussion and voting

4.20-4.45pm National Treasurer's annual report and voting

4.45-5.30pm Outgoing NE leadership proposals and election of National Executive

5.30-6pm Conference close

For more info about the proposed agenda, or make suggestions, please contact Lisa at national_office@socialist-alliance.org or (02) 9690 2508.

Draft agenda for trade union workshop

What options for trade union activists to fight Work Choices?

Saturday, October 28 @ Geelong Trades Hall

Can militant unions survive and thrive under Work Choices?

What do we do if Labor wins? What do we do if Labor loses?

What do we do about:

- * 457 visas and the exploitation of guest workers
- * Apprenticeships and skills
- * Bosses taking industries overseas
- * Welfare to Work

12noon Meetings of industry/union groups (lunch available)

1.00-1.05pm Welcome/Introduction – Tim Gooden (Secretary of Geelong Trades Hall Council)

1.05-1.20pm The French workers' and students' victory in 2006 - Stephane Lequeux (French academic/activist)

1.20-2.45pm Building the struggle against Work Choices – Can militant unions survive and thrive?

- * Do we have to make ourselves a small target to survive?
- * How do we reach out to unorganised workers and the rest of the community?
- * What do we do if Labor wins the next federal election? What do we do if Labor loses?
- * Community picket lines – the Union Solidarity experience

2.45-3.15pm Break and unveiling of a memorial to John Cummins

3.15-4.45pm If we could write the ALP industrial relations policy, what would it be?

4.45-5pm Adopt a set of demands/rights to be put to all political parties.

5pm Drinks/snacks and screening of Builders Labourers Federation film (to be confirmed)

7pm til late Dinner, drinks and music

The day will be organised in a workshop format with a facilitator. All proposals and suggestions for action will be recorded so that people can take the suggestions back into their own unions and workplaces.

Participants invited include activists, delegates and officials from the Maritime Union, National Tertiary Education Union, Union Solidarity, NSW National Union of Workers, NSW Firefighters, Posties, Manufacturing Workers Union, Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, Electrical Trades Union, Unite, United Casual Workers Alliance, regional areas such as Latrobe Valley and Portland, and recent industrial disputes, such as Amcor, Hawker de Havilland, Heinemann Electric, Toyota, Finlay Engineering, the CSR construction project, Qantas and the Radio Rentals dispute, and the taxi drivers attempting to establish their own union.

For more information, to make agenda suggestions or to indicate attendance at the union workshop, contact Sue Bolton on (03) 9663 7429, 0413 377 978 or sue_bolton@hotmail.com, or phone Tim Gooden on 0438 088 112.

Australian politics today and the Socialist Alliance

A draft resolution submitted by the Socialist Alliance National Executive to the 2006 national conference.

1. Since our last conference in May 2005, Socialist Alliance members and supporters in the trade union movement have worked hard to ensure that the overwhelming public opposition to John Howard's anti-worker and union-busting laws has been mobilised in the massive nationwide protests over the last year—the largest worker protests ever organised in Australia.

2. While this campaign has not stopped the Howard government from bringing in these laws, which reverse gains won over 100 years of working-class struggle, the scale of the mass mobilisations and the unpopularity of the laws demonstrated in numerous polls has undermined many bosses' confidence to rapidly use them against workers and unions. These mobilisations have also pressured Labor opposition leader Kim Beazley into promising to "rip up" Work Choices. The work of Socialist Alliance activists, especially in the unions, has been essential to achieving this result.

3. However, serious attacks on working people's conditions of work and right to organise are under way. CFMEU and AMWU members in Western Australia are facing fines of up to \$28,600 for taking industrial action, while some bosses have begun forcing individual contracts onto workers and even refusing to pay for work done. At the same time, the punitive new "Welfare to Work" regime is forcing thousands more people into greater poverty and exploitation, and being used to undermine union-won working conditions.

4. It is still early days in the struggle against Howard's anti-worker laws—crucial battles lie before us. Together with other militants, Socialist Alliance activists must continue to ensure that the campaign against Work Choices is not just an ALP election campaign, but one that strengthens unions' ability to defend workers' rights—now and under a possible future ALP federal government.

5. The Socialist Alliance will campaign for the defeat of the Howard government in the next federal election and for its replacement by a Labor government. However, we have little confidence that a Beazley government will stand by its

promise to rip up Work Choices and Australian Workplace Agreements and introduce an industrial relations system that enshrines our rights at work unless there is sustained political pressure from below, expressed in independent union and broader community mass mobilisation and protest.

6. Strengthening resistance to the Coalition's anti-worker laws should remain the priority campaign for the Socialist Alliance, not the least because serious defeats imposed on the organised working class will weaken the ability of all working people and all social justice movements to defend their rights.

7. In this context the 2005 Fightback Conference, an initiative of unionists in and around the Socialist Alliance, helped strengthen organised resistance to Work Choices and other anti-union laws by bringing together a broad range of militant trade unionists. The loose and informal network of militant resistance in the trade unions launched at this conference increased the potential to organise unionists for this fight on a broader scale. The Socialist Alliance should continue to facilitate the development of this broader network.

8. The Socialist Alliance's second campaign priority should remain building the anti-war movement, as well as opposing the attacks on civil liberties in the form of new "anti-terrorism" laws and the criminalisation and scapegoating of Middle Eastern-Australian, Arabic-speaking and Muslim communities.

9. The Socialist Alliance gave wholehearted support to the protests initiated by the Middle Eastern-Australian and Muslim communities against Liberal and Labor support for Israel's brutal wars on Lebanon and Palestine. Alliance activists continue to help lead and organise the rallies and marches against the occupation of Iraq and the destruction of our democratic freedoms that the "war on terror" is used to justify.

10. The imperialist wars of occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan are intensifying and the Howard government has increased its commitment of troops to aid its US allies. While the Labor opposition opposes Australian military involvement in Iraq it supports a greater Australian military intervention in Afghanistan as well as the US-Australia alliance (ANZUS). Labor state governments and the federal opposition have come 100% behind the so-called war on terror, and the associated racist scapegoating and assault on civil liberties. With George Bush coming to Australia for the APEC conference in September 2007, Socialist Alliance should help build the biggest and broadest possible demonstrations against Bush and Australia's ties with Washington's foreign policy and war machine.

11. While IR and anti-war remain the two top campaign priorities for the Socialist Alliance, our members continue to play leading roles in other important movements. For example:

- Socialist Alliance members in gay and lesbian rights organisations threw their energies into organising last month's national day on action against the federal ban on same-sex marriage. This remains an important and ongoing campaign in which Alliance members should continue to play a leading role.
- Socialist Alliance is beginning to play a role in building resistance to Federal and State government attacks on the rights and gains of Indigenous Australia. With both Liberal and Labor parties either persecuting or abandoning Indigenous people, it is critical that the Alliance strengthen its contribution to this struggle.
- Socialist Alliance is opposed to uranium mining, as we are opposed to the government's plan to sell it to countries that have not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, such as India. In the lead-up to next year's ALP national conference, at which the three-mines policy will be debated, Socialist Alliance activists have committed to work with other environmental and anti-nuclear activists, including some still in the ALP, to demand that all uranium mining cease. We are also committed to working with Indigenous peoples, and others, against the imposition of a nuclear waste dump anywhere in Australia and against plans to enrich uranium here.
- The high per capita output of greenhouse gases, a by-product of Australian corporate and government investment in fossil fuels rather than renewable energy technologies is another important campaign for Socialist Alliance. Widespread concern about the impact of greenhouse gases on climate change continues to generate local campaigns. These provide an important opportunity for the Alliance to highlight the limits of market-based "solutions" and to campaign for the rapid conversion of Australia's energy industry into one based on renewable sources.

12. Socialist Alliance will continue to take the people-before-profits message into the electoral arena. The campaign of Sam Watson (the only Indigenous candidate) against premier Peter Beattie in the September 9 Queensland elections was an inspiring example of how a socialist election campaign can "give voice to the voiceless" and help profile all social justice issues at election time. While most people disgusted with the conservatism of both Labor and Liberal are currently voting for the Greens in elections, and the Socialist Alliance vote will therefore generally continue to be small in the short term, for the Alliance the gains from such campaigns are not measured only in votes. Just as important is the chance they provide to increase the profile of socialist solutions, to be a tribune for all struggles for justice and democratic rights and to build the Alliance.

13. More generally, the Socialist Alliance's year-round campaigning activity puts left politics onto the political stage at every level. Whether it is putting motions to workplace meetings, organising students, distributing *Green Left*

Weekly, hosting public forums, joining picket lines, organising fund raisers, contributing to *Seeing Red* magazine—all help to build resistance by boosting people’s confidence to take action to defend their rights. It raises the voice of dissent and gives millions of people hope with the knowledge that they are not alone in their hatred of war, racism and union bashing, and that organised resistance is possible, and happening.

14. Socialist Alliance re-affirms its core objective of promoting left unity and regroupment. However, we recognise that the Socialist Alliance will have to go through a more extended period of united campaigning and political convergence with the broader forces generated by a new upturn of resistance before it can develop the social base and harness the leadership resources needed to take a significant step towards creating a new mass socialist party.

15. Nonetheless, for first time in many years many in the working class look towards Socialist Alliance as a valuable step forward along that path. By championing the need for a broadly based anti-capitalist or new mass workers’ party and by always helping to organise the most united left intervention possible in the social movements, the Socialist Alliance can continue to win the respect of broader layers of militant workers and social justice activists, and win them to its ranks. In this way Socialist Alliance will continue to take practical steps along the road to building the political force that Australia’s workers, poor and oppressed need.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

The following details of the functioning of the October 29 national conference were decided by the SA National Executive at its meetings on September 17 and 28.

1. The **membership deadline** for the purposes of calculating branch delegate be Friday, **October 13**.
2. The date by which all branches must **elect their delegates** be Friday, **October 20**.
3. The **deadline for all conference resolutions** to be received by the National Executive be midnight on Friday, **October 20**. Amendments to resolutions can be put to the conference right up until the relevant resolution is voted on.
4. The conference **registration fees for non-delegates** be \$20 waged and \$10 unwaged.
5. The **registration fee for delegates** be \$135 to enable interstate delegates’ basic travel costs to the conference to be covered out of all registration fees collected. Each branch is responsible for paying or subsidising the registration fee of delegates from their branch who are unable to pay all of their own registration fee. Affiliated organisations are responsible for covering the delegate registration fee of their members on the National Executive. State committees are responsible for covering the delegate registration fee for non-affiliated National Executive members from their state who are unable to pay it themselves. If possible and requested, branches in Victoria and Queensland receive additional reimbursements from the conference funds in recognition of their extraordinary expenses due to state election campaigns.
6. That the **delegate to membership ratio** be 1:13; that all National Executive members be given delegate status, in addition to branches’ delegates; and that the national treasurer be given delegate status, in addition to his branch’s delegates.

Transport to the national conferences from Melbourne

1. Avalon Airport Shuttle bus (Jetstar arrivals)

The Avalon to Geelong bus meets all incoming and outgoing flights. There is no need to book a seat in advance. \$17 one way.

Return from Geelong to Avalon MUST be pre-booked. Phone 03-52 788 788. \$17 one way. For more info, visit <http://www.avalonairport.com.au>

2. Gull bus from Tullamarine Airport (Qantas, Virgin arrivals)

The bus to Geelong leaves Tullamarine approximately hourly on weekdays, and approximately 1.5 to 2-hourly on weekends. There is no need to pre-book. Full fare is \$25 one way / \$45 return. Student concession is \$20 one way / \$36 return. For more info, visit <http://www.gull.com.au>

3. Train from Southern Cross (Spencer St) Station to Geelong – for those arriving in Melbourne on interstate trains.

Get the train on the Melbourne to Marshall line. It departs approximately hourly. There is no need to pre-book. For more info, visit http://www.viclink.com.au/timetables/timetable_options.php?type=vline&id=V100

Accommodation in Geelong

Some billets will be available for people who attend the conference from interstate. Because these places are very limited, they will be allocated to comrades in most financial need. To request a billet, please send your contact details to national_office@socialist-alliance.org or contact your local branch convener.

For members with part-time or full-time work, some inexpensive accommodation options are listed below. Comrades are responsible for booking their own accommodation for the conference, but if you would like more information about these options, please do not hesitate to contact the Geelong Socialist Alliance branch at geelong@socialist-alliance.org or 5222 6900.

	Address	Phone (03)	Single	Double	Walk from conf
MOTELS					
Bay City Motel	231 – 235 Malop St, Geelong www.baycitymotel.com.au	5221 1933	\$100	\$110	10 min
Kardinia Motel	422 La Trobe Tce (Cnr Sharp St) www.kardiniaparkmotel.com.au	5221 5188	\$75	\$90	20 min
Aberdeen Motor Inn	9 Aberdeen St	5221 2177	\$75-90		15 min
Comfort Inn Eastern Sands	1 Bellerine St, Geelong	5221 5577			
Kangaroo Motel	16 The Esplanade Geelong	52214022			
Best Western Admiralty Inn	66 McKillop Street, Geelong geelongmotorinn.bestwestern.com.au	52214288	\$140		5 min
CARAVAN PARKS					
Barwon Caravan & Tourist Park	153 Barrabool Rd, Belmont	5243 3842			30 min
Riverglen Holiday Park	75 Barrabool Rd Belmont	5243 5505	cabins		40 min
Billabong Caravan Park	59 Barabool Rd, Belmont	5243 6225			
City Southside Caravan Park	87 Barrabool Rd, Belmont	5243 3788			
BACKPACKERS ABOVE PUBS					
The National Hotel Backpackers	191 Moorabool St, Geelong	5229 1211			1 min
Irish Murphy's	30 Aberdeen St, Geelong	5221 4335	\$25		10 min
Carlton Central Hotel	13- 21 Malop St, Geelong	5229 1954			