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Labor's schools-based apprenticeships welcome while Liberals are asleep at the wheel: unions

Young Australians will have better opportunities to get an apprenticeship and pursue a career in the traditional trades as a result of the Labor Government's plan to improve skills and trades training in our schools.

These measures will mean more young Australians getting good jobs as carpenters, electricians, plumbers and other trades.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said in this election only one party seemed to have a plan to tackle Australia's future skills challenges with new investment in schools-based apprenticeships and on-the-job training.

By contrast, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's only contribution to the skills debate has been to discontinue the Productivity Places Program and the Trade Training Centres Program in his obsession with cutting government spending.

Ms Kearney said the creation of a new National Trade Cadetship and support for 50,000 additional work experience places recognised the importance of building a skilled trades workforce for the future.

"The Howard-Costello government damaged the economy through its neglect of skills and trades training," Ms Kearney said. "The last Liberal Government was oblivious to the need to develop skills to prepare the national economy for future growth, and the result was a \$9 billion skills shortage that Labor is making headway to address.

"These two new announcements over the past couple of days will build on the \$661 million of investment in the May Budget to create more than 60,000 new training places and apprenticeships and boost the literacy and numeracy skills of adult job seekers.

"A major effort is required to boost the number of young people commencing and completing apprenticeships and research shows the value of first giving young people strong foundation skills and a taste of what lies ahead.

"The National Trade Cadetships will provide young people interested in a trades career a clear early pathway through which they can build their skills and get some practical experience and exposure to the workplace. Importantly, the cadetships will give young people a nationally recognised qualification that provides credit towards an apprenticeship and further training.

"Unions are also pleased to see the role given to group training organisations to identify work placement opportunities with local employers. They have a proven track record in this type of work and their involvement will reduce the burden on schools to do this themselves.

"By cutting funding to the Productivity Places Program and Trade Training Centres in our schools, Tony Abbott will deny millions of young Australians the opportunity to have a career in the traditional trades."

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