

Wednesday 6 March 2019

## Skilled visa system robbing local jobs and driving down wages and conditions

The peak body for working people will address the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee's inquiry into Australia's broken temporary work visa system in Perth on Thursday.

The hearing follows the ACTU submission to the inquiry which recommended:

- Improved labour market testing to ensure local workers are hired first
- Measures to address the systematic exploitation of temporary visa holders
- Reform of working holiday visas
- A register of companies hiring overseas workers on temporary visas

There are 1.4 million people on temporary visas with work rights in a labour force of 14 million in Australia, while locals are missing out on jobs and training opportunities.

Regional youth unemployment has reached unacceptable levels, in parts of regional Queensland it has reached 25.7%<sup>1</sup> and in Perth 16.7%.<sup>2</sup>

Temporary work visas should only be used when there are cases of genuine skill shortages that can't be filled by locals – even then employers should be made to invest in training to ensure that those shortages don't occur again, the ACTU will argue.

We need to change the rules to ensure locals are provided with job and training opportunities. We also need to protect migrant workers from the kinds of exploitation that have become prevalent in our country. TAFE should be rebuilt so people can get the skills they need.

Hearings were held in Mackay on Tuesday, and will be held in Sydney on Wednesday, and Perth on Thursday.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“Working people deserve a fair go at jobs. But the Morrison Government lets big businesses hire visa workers over locals. We now have 1.4 million temporary work visas – 1 in 10 workers – and far too many of them are exploited and being used by business to cut costs.

“The Morrison Government has let the temporary skilled visa system get out of control as it is driven by the interest of big business, rather than the interests of local working people.

“We need to change the rules so that business owners hire and train locally before bringing in workers on temporary visas.”

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<sup>1</sup> Brotherhood of St Lawrence, as per Dec 2018.

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