

Tuesday, 8 October 2019

Voters concerned about protections for local workers and sovereignty under new Free Trade Agreements

Polling conducted for the ACTU shows that 75 - 80 per cent of voters in the key seats of Bass, Brand, Corio, Hunter and Rankin oppose trade agreements such as those with Peru, Hong Kong and Indonesia, which allow additional work visas without first testing if local workers can fill available jobs.

All the seats polled are deeply affected by historically high youth unemployment caused by the Morrison Government's massive cuts to skills training and apprenticeships.

There are currently 1.4 million people on work visas in Australia, a high over the last decade, and this is expected to rise significantly under these new agreements.

Voters are also deeply opposed to the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) clauses in these agreements which would give multinationals the power to take our government to court if new laws in Australia reduced their profits.

The Morrison Government looks set to bring on a vote on the enabling legislation for the Peru, Hong Kong and Indonesia agreements next week in Parliament.

The polling shows that more than half of voters were less likely to vote for a political candidate that supported agreements which did not protect local jobs through labour market testing and exposed the Australian Government to legal challenges from multinational companies through clauses.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"Scott Morrison and Peter Dutton have approved far too many temporary work visas, there are currently 1.4million people with temporary visas with work rights.

"At the same time, we have record low wage growth and high youth unemployment in regional areas.

"Now they have signed deals with Indonesia, Peru and Hong Kong that will allow even more short-term work visas, further drive down wages and increase exploitation.

"The Indonesian deal includes 1500 people coming in on training visas while we have a crisis in youth unemployment, close to a halving in our apprenticeship and training numbers and the decimation of TAFE

"Scott Morrison has also agreed to allow multi-national companies to take our Government to court and sue us for bringing in laws that benefit Australians.

"Scott Morrison has sold out Australian workers. The Liberals want to keep wages low. He always puts the demands of big business before Australians.

Media contact: Peter Green 0400 764 200; ACTU Media: 03 9664 7337