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Unlimited work visas not the way out of pandemic recession

Suggestions by some employer groups that we should return to the almost unlimited visa programs in place before the pandemic would compound the extreme hardship already being faced by young workers and everyone who is now unemployed, while putting thousands of vulnerable visa workers in grave danger.

Report after report found that the systems in place before the pandemic were allowing almost completely unchecked exploitation of visa workers in some sectors and were creating an entire class of workers in this country who were paid below legal minimums and had none of the OHS protections that all Australian workers should expect.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus

“Youth underutilisation is currently the highest on record. Youth unemployment is the highest in 20 years. We should be completely focussed on training local young people for good jobs, not allowing employers access to unlimited numbers of visa workers through programs that we know from experience have few checks on mistreatment.

“The current process for determining skill shortages that could be filled by visa workers is critically flawed. Bricklayers, cooks, secretaries, event organisers, early childhood educators, nurses, electricians, dance teachers, database administrators and dog handlers are all on the list of jobs which can be filled by visa workers. Our priority should be employing and training those who have lost their jobs because of the pandemic.

“Labour market testing is an essential part of the migration system which has been stripped away in areas of the economy under certain free trade agreements. It should be reinstated. These programs crush youth employment, especially in regional areas, and would be catastrophic during this crisis.

“The very least young people deserve is their Government to invest in their future, their jobs and their education.”

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