

Monday, 20 July 2020

Unions launch plan for jobs led reconstruction

Over a million secure jobs would be created or supported under a comprehensive and bold economic reconstruction plan to help steer Australia through and recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

The ACTU is calling for a Government led National Economic Reconstruction plan and offers up five concrete ideas that are designed to create and save jobs, protect and nurture whole industries, support public and private sector jobs, invest in future skills and training and strengthen Australia's physical and social infrastructure.

These ideas include a national commitment to free early child education and care, massive investment in training (including 150,000 free TAFE places), a 'Rediscover Australia' initiative to help our travel and hospitality sectors survive, a large and sustained increase in infrastructure investment and a comprehensive plan to expand sustainable manufacturing.

The ACTU has called for urgent Government intervention and investment to rebuild our economy and create permanent, secure jobs.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil

"We need government to put in place an ambitious and comprehensive National Economic Reconstruction plan to get the country back to work. Government must help build ongoing local jobs, more training and education opportunities to get people into jobs and provide support for people who are making things here in Australia."

"We need big and bold Government investment and action in order for Australia to return to health – both socially and economically.

"With almost one million people officially unemployed and many hundreds of thousands out of work, or without enough work, the Australian people need to see that the economy isn't going to fall off a cliff.

"We are calling on Scott Morrison and his Government to think big by investing public money for public good, in creating jobs that support people and communities now and into the future.

"Currently the Government has no plan to rebuild our economy and steer the country through the next stages of this crisis.

"We have it forward 5 practical Programs to deliver jobs, services, training and infrastructure for the people, places and industries who need them.

"Our initiatives will support and create jobs for women and men, for cities and towns, and for young people as well as older workers.

"Whether it is free and universal childcare, the expansion of public infrastructure investment with locally made materials, free TAFE courses focussed on rebuilding our skills and training sector, support to revitalise our travel and hospitality sectors and regional communities or building a sustainable manufacturing capacity this plan delivers jobs, community infrastructure and a future for Australia.

“This is a plan for a jobs led economic reconstruction”

ENDS (five program summary attached below)

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The five programs in summary are attached below:

#1: Early Childhood Education and Care Strategy

The Early Childhood Education and Care Strategy has several components including

- The provision of permanently free childcare,
- Capital investment to construct new high quality publicly funded not-for-profit facilities,
- The funding of universal access to 15 hours of preschool for 3 and 4 years olds,
- And an extension and improvement of the current wage subsidy to support the ongoing employment of staff in this sector.

#2: Training for Reconstruction

- A new nation-wide Free TAFE program supporting 150,000 places, which would also support 10,000 jobs in the TAFE system.
- TAFE put back at the centre of Commonwealth and state governments training funding with committing 70% of all government VET funding directed to TAFE.
- A Rebuilding TAFE fund - updating and modernising facilities with a particular focus in regional areas.
- Commonwealth wage subsidies for up to 100,000 apprentices and trainees for the life of their apprenticeship/traineeship and a guaranteed job at the end.
- And to assist our higher education sector, the Commonwealth government must extend JobKeeper wage subsidies to universities (which are currently excluded from the program) through the 2020 academic year, thus helping to protect another 20,000 higher education jobs at risk from the current crisis in international education.

#3: Rediscover Australia

The Rediscover Australia plan will support 350,000 jobs in tourism, the arts, accommodation, travel and regional services over the next 12 months with key elements including:

- Commonwealth sponsorship of artistic, community, agricultural, and entertainment events, productions, and exhibitions in all states.
- Additional grant support for the Australia Council, to support grant recipients with emergency financial requirements arising from the COVID-19 shutdowns.
- Expansion of JobKeeper wage subsidy provisions to include arts and entertainment workers
- The Commonwealth for a 12 month period to take over payment of regular state payroll taxes for paid employees in 2 industries critical to domestic travel and tourism (passenger transportation and overnight accommodation).

#4: National Reconstruction Investment Plan

- \$30 billion per year to significantly boost investment in public capital projects including funding for transportation, community and public housing, cultural and public service facilities, forest and fire management investments to better prepare for future fire seasons, and renewable energy assets and efficiency upgrades.
- The National Reconstruction Investment Plan would support the creation of 75,000 direct jobs in construction, and over 100,000 additional indirect jobs in supply and consumer industries.

- Strong benchmarks of between for mandated Australian made content in founded projects

#5: Sustainable Manufacturing Strategy

- Government rules to ensure Australian made products in all new infrastructure and public service procurement,
- zero interest loans for new renewable energy developments with a direct link to manufacturing,
- support for large gas and electricity users to upgrade equipment as part of energy conservation plans,
- expanded Commonwealth investments in rapid decarbonisation of the energy sector,
- Technology grants to support commercialised research and development
- Five new Sustainable Manufacturing Clusters in key areas including: lithium battery and value-added manufacturing; renewable hydrogen production; green primary metal manufacturing; electric vehicle manufacturing and servicing; and renewable energy machinery
- A Superpower Investment Fund to undertake co-investments (including public equity shares) in new sustainable manufacturing activities