

Friday 17 March, 2017

## **Statement from ACTU President Ged Kearney on National Job and Skills Summit**

Australian Unions welcome the ALP's focus on jobs and skills training, and congratulate Bill Shorten for taking a proactive approach to this key area of economic policy that has been comprehensively mishandled by the Liberal Government, leaving a range of challenges that must be urgently addressed.

It's overwhelmingly clear that Australia's labour market is failing to provide workers with sufficient opportunity to support themselves and their families and contribute to the economy.

More than 700,000 Australians, or close to 6% of the official labour force, are unemployed - a 13 month high - but the official criteria for classifying someone as "unemployed" are very conservative and miss many other Australians who want and need work.

Around 1.1 million workers, another 8.7% of the labour force, are not working full time and want additional work.

Almost one in three Australian jobs is now part-time, giving rise to ever growing numbers of people looking for more hours of work to make a living while working hours are increasingly irregular and inadequate, denying working people steady and sufficient incomes.

We desperately need more jobs, and greater job security - a holistic approach to skills training is one of the best tools we have available to achieve this.

The ACTU has proposed a six-point plan to the summit which includes integrating vocational education within a broader plan for managing our transitioning economy so that we are creating skilled workers and high quality jobs for them to fill.

The plan also stresses the importance of public TAFE being accessible to all, with less reliance on market-driven contestability, which has been proven time and again to not bring about the best outcomes for students.

Rather, we should be properly resourcing and promoting a strong, wide-reaching program of apprenticeships and traineeships so that graduates from the TAFE system have a pathway to secure work.

Employers too need recognise the contribution of skills and training to their profitability, and do more to help especially young workers into the workforce, and to provide the security and long-term job opportunities that are so rare in the current system.

We call on the Turnbull Government to join with us to bring about these much needed changes - work is already hard enough to find, secure work even more so.

**ENDS**

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