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ACTU resigns from skilled migration council after “deeply flawed” visa program announced

President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) Ged Kearney has resigned her position on the Government’s Ministerial Advisory Council for Skilled Migration (MACSM).

MACSM is an important committee set up to advise the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Peter Dutton on Australia’s temporary and skilled migration programs.

Ms Kearney made the decision to quit the council following the Turnbull Government’s decision to create two new classes of skilled migration visas to replace 457 visas and cut 216 professions from the skilled migration list with no consultation with MACSM.

Reasons for resignation:

- The Government’s replacement of the 457 visa system was not discussed with MACSM.
- The new visa policy was announced with very little detail indicating policy making on the run and political point scoring rather than a considered effective approach
- The Government has done nothing to change the flawed visa labour market testing system nor has it protected jobs for many Australians worried about job security.
- The Minister’s announcements in no way address the union movement’s concerns regarding the rampant exploitation by employers of temporary migrant workers.
- The reforms do nothing to address employers rorting the use of visas for many occupations which remain on the list.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“Had the Minister brought his ideas to the MACSM, the ACTU would have advised a different approach; that he ignored the committee renders it completely irrelevant”.

“I would have made it clear that the occupations that remain on the list, which include roof tilers, carpenters, joiners, chefs, cooks midwives, nurses and real estate agents, do not accurately reflect the genuine labour shortages in Australia.”

“The changes to the skilled migration visa system are only relevant to one in 10 visa holders so actually do not protect jobs for local workers.”

The Minister would have been far better off, starting from scratch building a new skills list and vastly increasing the barriers for employers to hire migrant workers as well as raising the penalties for their abuse.

“The visa system is being rorted and workers are being exploited every day but the Government only cares about its political survival.”

“Australian’s want to see a government that stands up for workers through stopping penalty rates cut, supporting a decent increase to the minimum wage, stopping casualisation of work and creating jobs.”

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