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Labor's 457 visa plan will restore integrity and trust in the system

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) today welcomes the Labor Party's plan to address the serious issues with the 457 visa program.

Labor today announced changes to the 457 visa program that would encourage employers to hire locally first, improve labour market testing, including closing loopholes in foreign trade deals, and an increase to the cost for employers hiring temporary overseas workers, with the extra revenue going to establish a new training fund.

The ACTU is also encouraged by the plan to create an independent market testing body, the Australian Skills Authority, which would oversee the occupations on the 457 list and determine which professions are in shortage, and the plan for a new visa class for higher academics.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

"Australian Unions have had serious concerns about the 457 visa program for a long time, specifically the lack of labour marketing testing and exploitation of workers, and are please Labor has announced a plan that will deal with these issues."

"The 457 visa program has become a political football and unions would be pleased to join an independent authority that works with key industry stakeholder that has the power to create actual change for the skilled migration program. We call on the Labor Party to ensure this is a multipartite market testing body with union representation."

"The ACTU last month resigned from the Government's Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Migration (MACSM) after it became clear the council's work was being ignored following changes to the skilled migration program being announced with no consultation."

"The Government's reforms are a con job and it has, in fact, created a 457-lite program that will only affect one in 10 occupations on the list. There are still 435 occupations remaining, including massage therapists, roof tilers, carpenters, joiners, chefs, cooks, midwives, nurses and real estate agents — many of which are being rorted by employers."

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