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Five-point plan to address unemployment and end exploitation of temporary visa workers

The Australian Council of Trade Unions has today released a five-point plan to boost local jobs and end the exploitation of temporary visa workers.

Australia has a widespread unemployment crisis in many regions, caused by employers' over-reliance on temporary visa workers.

And with one in ten people in the Australian labour force on a temporary visa, Australia has an underclass of easily exploitable workers.

The system of employer-sponsored "guest" workers gives employers all the power. It results in vulnerable workers being regularly exploited, underpaid, and often forced to work in dangerous conditions. Too often they can't speak up for fear of not just losing their jobs, but also being deported.

The use of vulnerable temporary visa workers also undercuts local job and removes incentives for governments and employers to train local people. Simultaneously, the government has cut funding from TAFE and privatised much of the vocational education sector.

Some employers are using temporary visa workers to avoid employing and training local workers, and in some regional areas of Australia, youth unemployment is as high as 20%.

Our five-point plan to bring back fairness:

1. Ensure local workers get the opportunity to be trained and employed in secure jobs in their local area;
2. End massive exploitation of hyper insecure temporary visa workers by ensuring that these workers are paid market rates and have their rights at work protected;
3. Change our immigration program to favour permanent over temporary migration;.
4. Temporary work visas must only be used when there are cases of genuine skills shortages that can't be filled by locals;
5. Rebuild TAFE so people can get the skills they need.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"The government allows racist attacks on migrants from its own Ministers, while allowing employers to import and exploit a cheap source of labour - temporary visa workers.

"Now, one in ten workers in Australia is on a temporary visa. Whether it is 7-11, farms, construction sites, meat processing factories or in hospitality, temporary visa workers are being exploited. This has to end.

"Local workers deserve the opportunity to gain secure employment. Jobs must be properly advertised locally, and people must be able to get the training they need to pursue these opportunities.

“We need to change the rules so employers are forced to advertise locally, and is only able to import workers for genuine skills shortages.

“Australia’s migration program must, as it did previously, favour permanent migration, so people can come to Australia, with their family, and build a life for themselves - with the same rights that we all deserve.

“Temporary visa workers in Australia must be given basic rights, such as access to a union and being paid properly.

“All workers, no matter where they are from, should have the right to be paid properly, have basic job security and to be safe at work.”

ENDS

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