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Government commitment to higher apprentice wages is a good first step to lifting completion rates: unions

Federal Government support for a pay increase for apprentices is a good first step towards improving the appalling apprentice completion rate, say unions.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said unions were pleased the Government had recognised that low pay was a major contributor the apprentice drop-out rate of 50%.

Unions also welcome the commitment to lift training standards, through more funding for mentoring and support services and action to harmonise standards across the country.

"This is a good first step to address the currently poor completion rate for apprentices," Ms Kearney said.

"Unions look forward to a review of apprentice wages by Fair Work Australia next year to address the appallingly low wages trainees currently receive," Ms Kearney said.

"We also welcome the review announced today to investigate targeting employer incentive payments to ensure bosses are using them for genuine training, and not simply to subsidise wages.

"The current completion rates for Australian apprenticeships are unacceptably low at an average of 48% and the only way to boost the number of skilled workers in our community is through better wages and training.

"Apprentices have told us that the poor remuneration is a key reason they don't complete their apprenticeships."

Ms Kearney said training and skill development should be a shared responsibility between Government, industry and unions, individual employers and apprentices and trainees themselves," she said.

"Unions have previously called on the Government to consider the panel recommendation for an employer contribution scheme to support the funding of a streamlined training system and are disappointed this has not been taken further. Employers must take their share of responsibility in ensuring as a nation we can meet our future skill needs through apprenticeships and traineeships.

"The resources sector in particular needs to improve its support for apprentices, with a major Government report last year calling for the sector to significantly increase the number of apprentices it employs in order to match its share of trade employment and reduce its reliance on temporary migration."

Ms Kearney said unions also welcomed the announcement of the new Australian Apprenticeships Ambassadors, which aim to boost the status and profile of apprenticeships.

Media contact:

Rebecca Tucker ph (03) 9664 7359 or 0408 031 269; rtucker@actu.org.au