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Fels report falls short on worker protections

The peak body for working people has expressed disappointment with the key recommendations of a Morrison Government report into migrant worker exploitation as materially inadequate.

The report from the Migrant Worker Taskforce chaired by Alan Fels recommends a “light touch” regulatory approach to the labour hire industry.

The labour hire recommendations are restricted to a small number of industries and will fail to prevent the use of labour hire companies to drive down wages and conditions.

The report fails to acknowledge the critical role of unions in the enforcement of employment standards. The Morrison Government’s constant attack on union and workers’ rights allows those employers who want to rip off workers, including migrant workers to act with impunity.

If the Morrison Government was serious about enforcement they would not be trying to change the laws to make it harder for workers to get access to union representation in the workplace.

The taskforce was established shortly after the election of the Turnbull Government in 2016 and has spent the best part of three years reaching its findings.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“We will look at this report in detail, but there are a number of immediate concerns.”

“The ‘light-touch regulatory model’, for labour hire where the company’s inconvenience of being regulated is placed above the needs of exploited workers is clearly insufficient.

“It places the burden on exploited workers to prove why their exploiter should not be allowed to continue exploiting them.

“Any serious attempt to address unscrupulous labour hire operators must ensure that labour hire companies cannot be used to cut wages in any sector of any person working in Australian.

“The Liberal and National parties are not serious about tightening up labour hire reports. One of the first things the Liberal State Government did when it took up office in South Australia was to scrap the labour hire licensing laws.”

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