

Thursday 11th November 2021

Littleproud puts employers in charge of policing Ag Visa exploitation

Agriculture Minister Littleproud has put employers in charge of preventing their own exploitation of temporary visa workers under the new Agriculture Visa.

Mr Littleproud has entrusted the welfare of vulnerable migrant workers toiling on Australian farms under his discredited Agriculture Visa to the so-called “Fair Farms program” - created and operated by Queensland employer organisation Growcom.

Mr Littleproud has put the fox in charge of the henhouse with his reckless decision. This latest worrying development will only add to growing concern across the community about the Government’s questionable new Ag Visa.

Broken visa systems exploit regional workers and rob regional areas, which already have higher than average unemployment levels, of what should be secure, reliable jobs in agriculture, meatworks, forestry, fisheries and a range of other industries.

The Morrison Government’s Agricultural Visa has no cap on the number of workers that employers can bring into Australia, no limit on the industries that they can work in, and no geographic restrictions on where they can work.

There’s no requirement for independent evidence of local labour shortages and no effective mechanism to ensure that local workers are offered jobs first, before bosses bring in vulnerable migrant workers to fill vacancies.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“By effectively putting Growcom in place as the regulator for this new visa scheme, the Morrison Government is putting the fox in charge of the henhouse.

“The so-called ‘Fair Farms’ program isn’t impartial and it’s not independent. Instead, it’s an offshoot of Growcom, a peak body for the Queensland horticulture industry.

“The ongoing exploitation, abuse and injuries of workers in migrant worker programs – including those reported this morning – highlight the need for rigorous regulation in the sector. We will not get this from an employer designed and led scheme.

“The Morrison Government’s Agricultural Visa scheme will give employers unlimited access to vulnerable migrant workers and allow workers to be traded like property.

“The Coalition is once again siding with corporations over workers.

“The Government has given employers a green light to replace locals with vulnerable migrant workers, with no mechanisms in place to ensure that the workers being brought in are filling genuine skill shortages or are protected from exploitation.”

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