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## Australian jobs to go under Abbott's free trade agreements

Australian jobs will be lost as a result of the Korea-Australian Free Trade Agreement (KAFTA) that came into effect today, said the ACTU.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the Abbott Government has signed Australia up to a deal that allows Korean companies operating in Australia to ignore Australian workers looking for jobs.

“Korean companies do not have to advertise jobs locally first before bringing their own labour from Korea.

“But on the flip side, the South Korean Government has protected jobs for its workers by putting restrictions on South Korean companies recruiting Australian workers, which is a terrible deal.

“It's ludicrous that at a time when unemployment is at a 12-year-high of 6.3 and youth unemployment is at 14.5 per cent - the Abbott Government has signed a deal that will put even more pressure on jobs.”

Ms Kearney said it is a worrying sign of what is to come when the Government finally reveals details of the free trade agreement it recently signed with China.

“Unions are deeply concerned by the Abbott Government's secrecy around labour mobility clauses in the free trade deal with China.

“If it is a good deal for Australian workers why won't they reveal the details? What we do know is that it allows Chinese workers to be brought in on individual contracts for infrastructure projects of \$150 million or more.

“These are not massive projects – a \$150 million project is an office building – an office building that could be built by skilled Australian workers looking for jobs.

“There is absolutely no benefit from foreign investment if both the profits and the jobs for a project simply go back overseas.”

Ms Kearney said the government's claim that the deal is a win for Australian businesses because Chinese tariffs will be reduced does not stack up.

“China can simply cut tariffs and then manipulate its currency to come out ahead. Even senior Liberal MP Bill Heffernan spoke out against the deal, asking how we can have a free trade deal with a country that won't put its currency on the market.”

“The reality is that Australians will pay a very high price for this deal through higher unemployment as Chinese workers are brought in for jobs on infrastructure and resource projects, while our already struggling manufacturing industry will be devastated further.”

Unions from the resources, services, transport and manufacturing sectors are united in campaigning to ensure any Australian free trade agreements protect Australian jobs.

“Unions support a fair, transparent and mutually beneficial trading scheme – but the Abbott Government has failed to strike such a deal with either China or Korea,” said Ms Kearney.

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