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## Plan for more temporary work visas will push up unemployment

The review of Australia's skilled migration system has ignored the impact the growing number of foreign workers on temporary visas is having on Australia's job market and unemployment – particularly young people.

The ACTU submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection review shows the number of temporary visas holders has increased significantly.

There were 1.112 million temporary visa holders in Australia as of September 2014, an increase of over 28,000 or 2.6% in just one year, and most had work rights.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said the review has failed to consider the impact the growing number of temporary visas holders is having on unemployment.

“Unemployment at 6.1 per cent and youth unemployment at 13.1 per cent – yet the review has narrowly focused on creating new visa types, such as the proposed new short-term mobility visa that reduce protections and safeguards for Australian and overseas workers, and increase even further the size of the temporary visa workforce in Australia,” said Mr Oliver.

“The paper fails to explain how deregulating work visas will benefit the large numbers of Australian workers without jobs, the thousands of young Australians unable to secure a trade apprenticeship, and the thousands of young Australian university graduates coming on to a depressed graduate job market over the next few years.”

The data ignored by the review includes:

- The labour force underutilisation rate for 15-24 year olds in Australia has increased from 24.9% in November 2011 to 31.9% in November 2014 – meaning nearly one in three young persons in the work force were either unemployed or looking to work more hours
- 17,000 fewer young people under 24 started an apprenticeship in the first quarter of 2014 than the same time in 2013, and the 2015 outlook is similar
- Only 68.1% of new bachelor degree graduates seeking full-time work were in full-time jobs in 2014, down from 76.1% in 2012 – and the number of new graduates is projected to grow by 20-30% over the next few years
- The number of 457 visa nominations fell by 50 per cent in nursing and 46% in engineering after labour market testing was introduced for these occupations in 2013

Mr Oliver said Australians want a plan for economic growth that will create good jobs with decent wages and strong investment in skills and training – not a plan to make it easier for companies to bypass Australian workers, university graduates and apprentices.

“The review of Australia's skilled migration system needs to focus on strengthening requirements for employers to advertise jobs locally before recruiting workers from overseas.”

Australian Unions are calling for a Senate Inquiry into the skilled migration visa system.

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