

Friday, 10 April 2015

Young Australians face long-term unemployment and poverty without government investment

A generation of young Australians will be trapped in long-term unemployment and poverty without investment in proven skills and training programs.

With National Youth Week starting today, the ACTU is urging the government to tackle rising youth unemployment by reversing its billion dollars in budget cuts to skills and training.

These cuts include the “Tools for your trade” program that helps apprentices pay for their equipment and the “Youth Connections” program to support 14 to 18-year-olds at-risk of dropping out of education or work.

Instead of investing in skills and training to help young Australians get a job, the Abbott government is trying to punish young unemployed people by making them wait six months before they can receive income support under its ‘learn or earn’ plan.

The government’s move to make it easier for employers to hire overseas workers on temporary work visas without any obligation to hire Australian workers or invest in skills and training is also costing young Australians job opportunities.

Australian Unions call on the Abbott Government to deliver a plan for jobs and to increase spending on skills and training in the coming budget.

The government must provide young Australians with training and job opportunities in order to tackle youth unemployment and ensure thousands of young Australians are not trapped in poverty.

Key facts:

- The youth unemployment rate in February 2015 was 13.9% compared to 12.4% in Feb 2014
- The Abbott Government cut \$1 billion from skills and training programs in the 2014 budget
- The government cut a further \$100 million in the mid-year update (MYEFO), including \$66 million in support for adult apprentices and \$43 million in funding to equip jobseekers with basic skills to help them find work
- The Tools for your Trade program was replaced with Apprentice Loans program that leaves apprentices with a debt to pay off

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“The federal government must invest in skills and training in order to tackle rising youth unemployment.

“The government needs to deliver a plan for jobs – instead it has overseen the demise of thousands of jobs in the manufacturing industry and made it easier for employers to bring in temporary workers from overseas at the expense of local jobs.

“If the Abbott Government continues to punish young job seekers by denying them income support for six months and cutting skills and training programs, then there is a real risk a generation of young Australians will be trapped in long-term unemployment and poverty.

“The government’s Work for the Dole and Green Army schemes do not lead to long term sustainable jobs – instead of penalising young unemployed people the government needs to invest in training and skills programs and create a plan for jobs.”

Media contact:

Natalie Pestana, 0439 986 224 or Kara Douglas, 0418 793 885