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Abbott Government's industry policy fails Australian workers

The Abbott Government's new industry policy panders to big business and strips away national recognition of skills for workers.

Industry Minister Ian McFarlane outlined the policy in a speech at the National Vocational Education Training conference in Brisbane today.

"The Minister talks about the value of a trade but then in the same breath suggests that it's ok for workers to just do bits and pieces of a trade instead of achieving a nationally recognised qualification," said ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver.

"This completely fails to create a workforce of skilled Australians who can fill long term and sustainable jobs," said Mr Oliver.

"Instead the Government plans to use tax payer's money to pay for courses designed by employers that only give workers the skills to work in their particular business, rather than nationally recognised trade qualifications they can use anywhere."

Mr Oliver said this is yet another example of Abbott Government policy being dictated by big business.

"Minister McFarlane talks about an industry-led training system but what he really means is a system that is all about the needs of individual business with little or no recognition of what is in the best interests of workers.

"The Government needs to fund full qualifications that give employees the best opportunity to apply their skills across an industry or occupation – not just a single factory.

"Nationally recognised training gives workers skills that can be deployed throughout the whole economy and Government funding should reflect that."

National Centre for Vocational Education Research figures show unemployed people are more likely to find a job if they have a full Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification.

- 46% of unemployed people found a job with a full qualification compared to 33% who only completed specific modules

Full qualifications also produce better results for existing workers.

- 62.4% of existing workers with a full qualification were promoted or got a better job after training, compared to 48% of people who just completed modules.

Mr Oliver said it is also deeply concerning to hear the Minister's intention to sideline the joint union-employer Industry Skills Councils.

"This comes on top of the Government's decision to axe the Australian Workplace and Productivity Agency and to hand pick a group of big business leaders for the new Vocational Education Training (VET) Advisory Board led by Liberal mate, John Hart.

"It's ludicrous to exclude TAFE or union representatives from a board that will decide the future of the training system.

"It shows quite clearly that big business is calling the shots and the Abbott Government has no regard for the best interests of Australian workers."

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