

Monday 23 May 2016

Government continues FTA attack on jobs

Not content with the damage done to Australian jobs by the recently signed China Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA), the Turnbull Government is set to inflict more pain on workers with the recent announcement of the Australia-Singapore “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” or CSP.

With full details yet to be confirmed, it’s already clear that the CSP would waive labour market testing in the 457 and the 400 visa program for each of the 651 occupations on the 457-eligible list - including tradespersons and professionals, and Singaporean students studying in Australia.

One new addition to the CSP is a “pilot internship program (which) will aim to give 100 Singaporeans studying in Australia more internship opportunities with leading Australian companies.”

This proposal is worryingly short on detail, but coming hot on the heels of the Government’s disastrous \$4 an hour PaTH “internships,” a disturbing trend of undermining Australian jobs and wages is starting to appear.

It’s also worth noting the revelations from Fairfax media this weekend that Chinese business interests made hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of political donations to the Liberal Party at the same time the government was negotiating ChAFTA.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“Despite little evidence that these types of trade agreements deliver anything other than damage to Australian jobs, the Turnbull Government is pressing ahead with negotiations with Singapore on the CSP.”

“The inclusion of a ‘pilot internship program’ is particularly concerning, setting alarm bells ringing for Australian workers everywhere.”

“First it was 457 visas, then it was \$4 an hour jobs – now the Turnbull Government is talking about directly shipping in unpaid workers, under the guise of internships, from Singapore.”

“The Turnbull Government appears to be intent on undermining wages and job security at every turn.”

“Apparently there’s no worker exploitation scheme it won’t embrace.”

“With so many questions yet to be answered around political donations made by Chinese business interests to a campaign committee set up to support Trade Minister Andrew Robb on the very day the ChAFTA deal he negotiated was agreed, the Australian public is right to be sceptical of any free trade deals this government is spruiking.”

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