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Coalition's plan to protect migrant workers too little, too late

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) again asks the Minister for Employment Michaelia Cash to work with Australian Unions to protect migrant workers.

The scope of the Federal Government's new Migrant Worker Taskforce simply does not go far enough, with only four of the 33 recommendations in the March 2016 Senate enquiry report addressed.

Beyond the lack of comprehensiveness in the announcement, no members of the new Migrant Worker Taskforce actually work with exploited migrant workers on the ground, such as unions and not for profit organisations, it has only appointed government agencies.

The Government also needs a plan to invest in training and assist the local labour market. Unemployment remains at just under 6% and youth unemployment is in double digits

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver:

"While the ACTU welcomes any measures that will reduce the exploitation of local or overseas workers, this is a case of too little, too late."

"Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Minister Cash have spent the past three years saying that there are no problems with our temporary skilled migration schemes."

"Where is the Government's plan to ensure that employers are not able to take the easy option and employ temporary overseas workers, without first investing in training and looking to the local labour market?"

"Unfortunately, the evidence available from our affiliated unions and other sources is that both Australian and overseas workers are being disadvantaged and migrant workers are exploited on a regular basis under the current policy and program settings that govern temporary work visas."

"The Government must also commit to a proper licensing regime and public register of labour hire companies. The temporary visa program has been abused by many unscrupulous labour hire companies in Australia and the Government needs a plan to deal with dodgy labour hire companies both locally and overseas."

"The Taskforce should have union, NGO and local community representation that help migrant workers on an everyday basis."

"Since the new modern slavery and labour trafficking provisions came into force in 2013, the Department of Immigration has not prosecuted one employer. More vigorous safeguards need to be in place to protect the interests of overseas workers on temporary visas."

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