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**Hundreds of thousands of Australian workers overlooked for jobs**

Unions are concerned that up to 350,000 Australian workers are searching for jobs in the very occupations where employers are continuing to use 457 visa workers.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said rates of unemployment and underemployment were rising in industries where bosses argue they can't find local workers.

"Nurse graduates, carpenters, cooks, engineers, welders, fitters and motor mechanics are among the workers who tell us they are having trouble finding work, while employers turn to 457 visa workers to fill those positions." Mr Oliver said.

"At the same time you have shameful levels of youth unemployment and the Abbott Government looking at ways to make it easier for employers to hire temporary workers, particularly under the 457 scheme."

"We need foreign workers, particularly under permanent migration. Where there is genuine shortage, these workers fulfil an important role."

"However, when you have hundreds of thousands of local workers job-searching in 'skill-shortage areas' you have to question whether the 457 visa program is achieving its ultimate aim or if it's being abused."

Mr Oliver said, "The Abbott Government has launched an inquiry into the use of 457s with the intention of deregulating an already under-regulated program."

"In February this year, Australia recorded the highest unemployment rate in over a decade. Even more concerning, youth unemployment is currently at its highest levels in 10 years," Mr Oliver said.

"The ACTU met with the 457 review panel on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May to outline why Australia needs more, not less regulation of the 457 visa system."

"If you ask the nurse graduate who can't get a placement, a cook, a construction worker, an IT worker, they will tell you that all they want a fair go. Why shouldn't Australian's be given priority access to the local jobs for which they are qualified?"

"Employers must be obligated to make a genuine effort to advertise a job locally. We can't be importing workers and creating a market glut that forces up unemployment, shuts out local workers and halts opportunities for young people trying to get into the workforce."

Facts:

**This is what happened when there was no labour market testing:**

- In 2011-12, the number of 457 primary visa applications increased by 33.4 per cent from the previous year. The total number of 457 visa holders in Australia jumped 26.4 per cent from 72 050 to 91 050.
- At the same time, total job advertisements (as measured by the ANZ job ads series) plummeted 9 per cent over the year, and ABS data show the number of people out of work increased by almost 40 000 as unemployment went from 4.9 per cent up to 5.2 per cent.
- During the following financial year 2012-13, jobs ads fell a further whopping 19 per cent over the year and as at June 2013 were close to 30 per cent below their most recent peak at the end of 2010.

- Unemployment increased again reaching 5.7 per cent by June 2013 with a further 77 000 people out of work compared to the same period 12 months before.
- Meanwhile, over the same period 457 visa applications increased by 13.5 per cent and the number of 457 visa holders increased 18.6 per cent from 91 050 to 107 970.

### **Australians want work in the same areas where 457 visa use is at its greatest**

- The greatest use of 457 visas is for trades and technician workers and professionals. The latest figures for 2013-14 show professionals made up 48.4% of all visa grants, while technicians and trade workers made up 25.7% of all visa grants.
- As at 31 March 2014, there were a total of 50,100 professionals working in Australia on 457 visas and 32 910 technicians and trade workers (out of a total of 111 780 primary 457 visa holders in Australia).
- Yet, there are currently 67 000 trades and technician workers unemployed and 77 400 underemployed – that is 144 400 Australians looking for work or want more work (that is 8.5% of the 1.691 million trades and technician workers);
- There are currently 83 700 professionals unemployed and 120 800 professionals underemployed – that is 204 500 Australians looking for work or want more work (that is nearly 8% of the 2.566 million professionals)
- In the 9 months to 31 March 2014, there were 10 210 new 457 visas granted to trades and technician workers and 19 260 to professionals.

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