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Morrison Government skilled migration plan will undermine jobs and wages and worsen exploitation

A plan for the future of the skilled migration system outlined in a Morrison Government report last week would lead to the mass exploitation of temporary migrant workers while also driving down wages and reduce the availability of local jobs.

The recommendations from the Government's Joint Standing Committee on Migration include creating a pathway for temporary migrants through quarantine, considering easing labour market testing and expanding the list of jobs which can be filled by temporary migrants.

These changes would reduce opportunities for local employment across the economy weeks before the Morrison Government is planning to end the JobKeeper wage subsidy and at a time when unemployment and underemployment are still historically high.

The use of temporary migrant labour in areas like nursing and skilled trades often leads to migrant workers being put in dangerous situations, being paid below legal minimums and not provided with adequate training.

Quotes attributable to ETU National Secretary Allen Hicks:

"After destroying TAFE the Government now wants to plug the skills gap by importing thousands of people who can't enforce their labour rights and are easily exploited.

"This plan will see a race to the bottom for wages and undermine local efforts to stimulate jobs and the economy. The report is a disgrace."

Quotes attributable to ANMF Federal Secretary Annie Butler:

"Over the years, the ANMF has raised concerns about TSS visa workers being exploited by some local employers, particularly in aged care and private hospital settings.

"It's why there must be strong policy and regulatory settings to ensure that employers are required to recruit nurses and midwives locally, before going offshore for labour."

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"These proposed changes are designed to allow unscrupulous employers to exploit temporary migrant workers while driving down wages and denying opportunities for local employment.

"It's beyond belief that the government would weaken labour market testing while 2 million Australians remain either unemployed or underemployed.

"A true recovery will be driven by creating secure, well-paid local jobs which will drive spending in the local economy. This plan fundamentally undermines the recovery from the pandemic.

“If the Morrison Government is serious about a recovery from this pandemic it should condemn this plan, extend JobKeeper and invest in high-quality training and good, secure local jobs.”

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