

Thursday, 27 April 2023

Passport to progress: A better, fairer approach to migration

The ACTU welcomes the reforms of the migration system outlined by Home Affairs Minister Clare O’Neil today.

In our submissions to the Review of Australia’s Migration System, the ACTU called for a shift away from short-term visas back towards permanent migration; to integrate migration with our skills and workforce planning systems; to engineer exploitation out of the system; and for a tripartite system that engages employers and unions in line with international best practice.

It is essential that Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) play a key role in independent verification of skills and occupational shortages.

For too long, Australia’s migration system has been based on temporary, employer-sponsored migration, driven by the short-term interests of business instead of the longer-term national interest. This has resulted in a system that fails to ensure local workers have the skills and opportunities they need, and it bakes in exploitation of migrant workers.

We welcome the Government’s commitment to a fit-for-purpose migration system with a shift towards permanent migration. Migrant workers must have the ability to change employers without jeopardising their ability to stay in the country, job security and workplace rights.

The ACTU welcomes the Government implementing its pre-election commitment to raise the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT) – the minimum salary threshold for temporary skilled migrant workers – and the important new pathway to permanency for temporary skilled visa holders.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil:

“We welcome the Government’s commitment to overhauling our migration system.

“Our migration system is broken and has failed both Australian workers and migrant workers that come to our country. This has resulted in the mass exploitation of temporary migrant workers and denied opportunities to local workers because of a lack of integration with our skills and training system.

“Too often we have seen claims of skill shortages when in some sectors the real shortage is of jobs with fair wages and conditions.

“The Government’s commitment to design exploitation out of the system is critically important and we look forward to working with them to see this realised.

“We are pleased to see the Government commit to an evidence-based approach to migration by establishing a formal role for the new Jobs and Skills Australia to determine skills needs based on tripartite advice.

“We welcome a system that enables temporary skilled visa holders having a pathway to permanency. All migrant workers should be able to change employers and enforce their workplace rights without jeopardising their ability to stay in the country. They should have opportunities to become permanent residents.

“The lift to the TSMIT after a decade of neglect is an important first step but more needs to be done to ensure this rate is not used to undercut wages and that it increases over time.”

ENDS

Media: Gareth Hathway 0499 878 782