

26 May 2014

## Government's youth jobs plan: become a fruit picker

In what can only be described as a complete and total lack of understanding of the predicament of young job seekers, coupled with convenient amnesia in relation to his own Government's failure to create jobs, fund training and support young people into work, Employment Minister Eric Abetz has today casually suggested that young unemployed people should become fruit pickers.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick said it was a complete abdication of responsibility on the part of the Government that the best they can do to articulate a plan for jobs, particularly in regions of high youth unemployment such as Tasmania, was offer up a thought bubble on morning radio.

"Telling the next generation of workers that they should enter casual, insecure, seasonal work such as fruit picking shows the Government's lack of action on jobs is coupled with an alarming absence of comprehension of facts," Mr Borowick said.

"Is Minister Abetz calling for the thousands of nurse graduates who have been locked out of the workforce because of the overuse of 457s to forgo their years of training and become farm hands?"

"Should people who have studied engineering or IT or trained to be a mechanic or an electrician and have not immediately found employment move to a farm where they can't apply for work or pursue their careers?"

"These sorts of comments from Australia's Employment Minister demonstrate a complete disconnection with the lives of Australian workers, especially young people."

Mr Borowick said the lack of coherence in the Government's employment "strategy" is demonstrated by both Senator Abetz advising job seekers to move to Tasmania to pick fruit, while the Prime Minister last week advised Tasmanian job seekers to leave the state in search of employment.

"If the Government's recent directions to young job seekers were street signs this intersection would be experiencing some serious crashes," Mr Borowick said.

"Adding insult to injury, the Abbott Government's budget has slashed funding to skills and offered no investment in further job creation.

"This budget clearly shows the Government is not committed to creating jobs or supporting skills training and development. It's all stick and no carrot.

"Youth unemployment is currently 12.9%, much higher in some regions and the Government expects that young people will be 'earning or learning'.

"Yet the Government has ripped funding out of the skills budget, taken away important programs that support apprentices, help existing workers to transition to new jobs and young workers to get that first job."

"For example the Government has completely cut career advice for parents by slashing \$5.8 million over four years.

“Supporting workers who will be losing or have lost their jobs and are looking for work is also a low priority with over \$13 million in cuts to programs.

“What’s becoming crystal clearer is that the Abbott Government is more interested in pushing people into low security, low skill and low paid jobs rather than helping people move into rewarding longer term careers.”

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