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Nurse graduates unemployed or underemployed

Thousands of nurse graduates continue to complete their degrees only to face unemployment, underemployment and job insecurity.

Nurse and midwifery graduates are struggling to get work because of a 'lack of experience' with employers preferring to hire international workers instead.

A new survey run by the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) found over a third of graduates were jobless and those who did find employment worked casually and wanted more hours.

Only 15 per cent of survey participants responded that they had secure employment.

The results come as a Senate inquiry investigates the growing use of temporary working visas.

Union submissions to the Senate Inquiry into Temporary Work Visas have raised concerns graduates, such as nurses, are being replaced by workers on temporary visas such as 457 or working holiday visas.

Unions are also concerned about the abuse and exploitation of foreign workers on temporary visas and have called for a shift away from the hiring of temporary visa workers to permanent migration, capping of working holiday visas and a tightening of laws around labour market testing.

There should also be a complete moratorium on the expansion of temporary work visas until the Senate Inquiry reports its findings.

We must support and invest in the next generation of Australian workers – graduates and young people should not be missing out on job opportunities because of the overuse and abuse of the temporary visa system.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) estimates that in 2013-14:

- In Tasmania, 60 per cent of nursing graduates were unable to find work
- In Queensland, only 600 graduates out of 2500 were employed
- In Victoria, 800 graduates could not get a job
- In Western Australia, 400 nurse graduates could not get a job
- In South Australia, 280 nurse graduates could not secure a position

Key facts about the temporary visa system:

- There are over 1.2 million temporary visa holders working in Australia and they make up 10 per cent of the workforce
- Unlike the permanent migration program, the temporary visa system is largely uncapped
- At the current growth rate temporary visa numbers will reach two million by 2020
- Between 2007-14, the number of temporary visa holders rose by around 600,000 – an almost 50 per cent increase

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“Graduates and young people should not be missing out on job opportunities because of the overuse and abuse of the temporary visa system.

“The temporary visa system is broken and must be fixed or we’ll continue to see young Australians missing out on jobs and foreign workers being exploited.

“Student nurses and midwives complete their degrees, they are often very passionate about this chosen career path and yet when they try to find work employers won’t give them a chance.

Quotes attributable to ANMF Federal Secretary Lee Thomas:

“The ANMF is seeing more and more nurse and midwife graduates walk away from their chosen professions, because they can’t find jobs.

“That’s not only throwing away public investment in their training and education, but it’s also contributing to the country’s overall increasing shortage of nurses.

“At a time when Australia faces a growing shortage of nurses and midwives, it’s appalling that so many graduates are unable to find work and many feel they have no option than to walk away from their chosen profession.

“As a nation, it is now crucial that we start building a nursing and midwifery workforce for the future, giving graduates the training and experience they need to become the senior nurses and midwives of tomorrow.

“We must work together to find solutions that promote a strong nursing and midwifery workforce.”

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