

Thursday 25 August, 2016

Still no answers on youth unemployment

ABS labour force figures released today show rising youth joblessness is not going away, with the unemployment rate for 15 to 24 year olds at 12.7% - up from 12.4% in June.

Employment data for July also shows the total number of jobseekers aged 15 to 24 has crept up by 8,000 to a total of 268,000. This reverses the trend of the past few months of small improvements and sees youth unemployment back close to where it was 12 months ago.

Today's results lay bare the Federal Government's lack of action on jobs. Instead of developing a real plan to create meaningful, well-paid jobs, the government continues to blindly push ahead with the PaTH program.

Despite widespread uncertainty surrounding PaTH - and deep concern from unions, community groups and Interns Australia - the Employment Minister is blundering through a limited consultation process with an overly optimistic April 2017 start date. We are seeing limited scrutiny on the \$4 an hour internships, no discussions with young unemployed people and no consultation on whether or not this program will even create a single job.

We need a proper employment strategy that links training, innovation, better soft skills, and government investment in genuine job opportunities. Australia needs increased investment in early childhood education, schools, TAFE, universities, genuine traineeships and apprenticeships, not low paid make-work for desperate young job seekers.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

"The lack of a coherent plan to tackle rising youth unemployment is becoming one of the defining characteristics of the Abbott and now Turnbull Liberal Governments."

"Every month the ABS release data showing the challenge is not going away, yet all we get from the government is corporate tax cuts and a rushed, consultation-light PaTH scheme that offers employers free labour and a \$1,000 handout without creating even a single job."

"It will do nothing to help the four job seekers currently competing for every vacancy."

"This is a government that has cut a billion dollars from apprenticeship programs that have demonstrated their value time and time again, and is instead throwing money at a cobbled together PaTH scheme that has to be protected from proper public consolation lest it wilt under the slightest scrutiny."

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Media contact: Ben Jessup 0410 632 123 or ACTU Media 03 9664 7315

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