



MEDIA RELEASE

**THE HON BRENDAN O'CONNOR MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND
WORKPLACE RELATIONS
MEMBER FOR GORTON**

**THE HON RICHARD MARLES MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND BORDER
PROTECTION
MEMBER FOR CORIO**

ABBOTT GOVERNMENT IN DENIAL ABOUT 457 VISA EXPLOITATION

Following the Abbott Government's softening of visa laws there has been a rise in employment issues for overseas workers, raising concerns about the current 457 Visa laws.

Labor calls on the Government to strengthen the 457 visa safeguards it has deliberately relaxed, to make it easier for companies to hire overseas workers.

The latest report by the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) indicates that 18 per cent of visa holders from a random group of 175 employers have experienced employment issues such as underpayment.

This is consistent with earlier reports that have been produced by the FWO.

In 2013 Labor strengthened 457 Visa laws, which ensured among other things that employers had to look local first before hiring temporary overseas workers.

Given the Abbott Government's insistence to loosen the scheme, Labor established a Senate Committee to Inquire into matters such as the misuse of 457 Visas, which the Government also opposed.

The results of the FWO report show why the Abbott Government should not have opposed the Inquiry and why it should not remove Labor's important safeguards for workers, including loosening English proficiency requirements.

Australia's work visa program must operate with an assurance to the community that robust safeguards are in place to protect all workers. It must not be used as a back door avenue to source cheap labour.

Australian unemployment is at unacceptably high levels and the Budget forecasts unemployment to rise further to 6.5 per cent, the highest in 14 years.

The 457 skilled migrant visa program should not to be a default to replace Australian jobs.

Now is not the time for the Government to loosen up the scheme so business can more easily bring in workers from overseas rather training and investing in job seekers here.

Only Labor has had a consistent approach to implementing effective and tough 457 Visa laws, and by strengthening the FWO to conduct random inspections of Australian workplaces.

Labor welcomes regular updates by the FWO on its monitoring of 457 visa holders and the referrals to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

We cannot have people working in this country and being denied proper employment protections.

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