



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

Employment

QUESTION

Monday, 21 November 2016

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner Entsch, Warren, MP
Speaker

Source House
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Responder Morrison, Scott, MP
Question No.

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Mr ENTSCHE (Leichhardt) (15:12): My constituency question is to the Treasurer. Can the Treasurer outline how the government is working to promote jobs for Australian workers in areas of high youth unemployment such as Leichhardt, which has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the country at more than 27 per cent? Can the Treasurer advise of any alternative plans which put foreign workers at a competitive advantage in the Australian labour market?

Mr MORRISON (Cook—Treasurer) (15:12): I thank the member for Leichhardt for his question. He knows what it is like to get a job when you are young and do whatever job you can get to start life. His first job, he tells me, was cleaning the bathrooms at the local train station as a 15-year-old. We know that Australians across this country want to work and want to work more. We know that young people want to be in jobs and they want to go and get those jobs. That is why in the budget this year we announced our \$850 million youth employment PaTH program, which will get underway next year, which is about getting longer term young unemployed people into work, where they can choose a future which is completely different to being dependent on a life of welfare.

But they need the opportunities, particularly in regional areas, and that is why it comes as some great surprise to me that the Leader of the Opposition goes around beating his chest about how much he wants to support Australian workers but, at the same time, wants to offer a big, fat tax cut to foreign workers—people coming on 417 visas. He wants to cut their tax from 32½c all way down to 10½c. On this side of the House, we have put forward a sensible, practical proposal of 19c in the dollar, which ensures that backpackers who come to Australia take home and put in their pocket what they would get if they were working in Canada or New Zealand or the United Kingdom—but that is not good enough for this mob. They want to give foreign workers a tax advantage to go and pick fruit over young Australians who could go and do that work. They want to incentivise employers in regional Australia by giving foreign workers a tax cut for them to pay less tax than an Australian would in the same circumstance.

When it comes to foreign workers, we have had the Leader of the Opposition beating his chest about 457s, but he was the gold-medal standard in issuing 457s when he was responsible. This is the party of Mr McTernan who was on a 457 when he worked with Julia Gillard, for goodness sake! Apparently there were not enough media professionals in this country who could provide the former government with media advice that we had to get someone out on a 457.

Then there are the unions who are employing 457 workers hand over fist, which has been exposed by the Minister for Employment. When it comes to talking about supporting Australian workers, you need to look no further than the big fat tax cut the Leader of the Opposition wants to ensure foreign workers get by reducing their tax rate from 32½c all the way down to 10½c.

This issue needs to be resolved, and I am confident that we will be able to come to an arrangement with those in the other place who are keen to see this issue resolved. What those opposite have done is nothing more than their usual cynical playing of politics with the jobs of young Australians.

Mr Joyce: Mr Speaker, after a delightfully entertaining day, although I would like to go on and on and on, I ask that further questions be placed on the *Notice Paper*.