



# BUSINESS NEEDS INCENTIVES TO HELP OUR YOUTH

## JOBLESS FACE COMPETITION FROM ABROAD

**Debra Bela**

BUSINESSES need more incentives to put on young Australian workers over foreigners, in the same way the Federal Budget has secured incentives for employers to hire older workers.

The Australian Youth Affairs Coalition said support for unemployed young people was eroding with a new “earn or learn” philosophy that removed all welfare benefits to unemployed people under 30 for the first six months.

“Some young people have a greater capacity to enter the workforce than others,” AYAC chief executive Craig Comrie said.

“Those struggling need more support. With people having to wait six months to obtain welfare, if they don’t have rich parents or supportive parents, they will be living in poverty.”

AYAC lost its federal funding to support young people in the Budget.

The lauded school to industry network program Partnership Brokers, which has been supported nationally by The Smith Family, will also be scrapped at the end of the year.

The jump in Queensland youth unemployment to 12.4 per cent this year puts it at crisis levels, more than twice the national average.

The Brotherhood of St

Lawrence expects this rate to jump to 46 per cent in Cairns by 2016 and to 25 per cent in Ipswich and Brisbane’s south.

At the same time, the Federal Government is actively encouraging people aged 18-30 to come to Australia on working holiday visas. The visas can be extended to two years if people work in regional or rural areas for at least three months.

Monash University professor Bob Birrell said the policy was creating a serious problem for young people, particularly those with no post-school education seeking work in semi-skilled or unskilled professions in retail and hospitality.

He said the government’s announcement of a new Work and Holiday Visa arrangement with Greece — where youth unemployment stands at 56 per cent — demonstrated a continued push to open the local labour market to more foreigners.

“Originally the idea was a cultural holiday experience, but the reality is that large numbers of those coming under the present rules are doing so because the Australian labour market is offering more opportunities,” Dr Birrell said.

“Countries are exporting their unemployment prob-

lem and adding to the seriousness of local youth unemployment.”

He said changes to welfare payments would compound the situation.

### LOOK TO THE EAST

An intense five-week training program designed by East Coast Apprenticeships (ECA) to better prepare young people and hone their attitude for a trade is offering 120 placements. The next round starts on May 19, with expressions of interest for another starting soon. ECA’s Alan Sparks said its trade outcome program (TOP) graduates had all found jobs. “The benefit of TOP is that it’s a short, sharp process to prepare a young person and nurture their personal attitude to fit into a work environment,” Mr Sparks said. TOP involves one week of college, followed by four weeks with a host employer.



**The future for young jobseekers is at a crossroads.**

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