

## MEDIA RELEASE

### ABBOTT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO LIFT GAME ON APPRENTICES

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015

AMWU National President Andrew Dettmer today called on the Abbott Government to lift its game in the crucial area of apprenticeships following comments over the weekend by NSW Skills Minister, John Barilaro, indicating that higher wages and more support were needed for apprentices.

“Australia cannot afford any more neglect of skills, training and apprenticeships if our economy is to keep up with the changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”, Mr Dettmer said.

“Mr Abbott, rather than tearing down the structures that underpin our world-renowned training system, should be building the capability of the training system to produce the skilled workers that we need.

“Mr Abbott is reverting to the Howard Government’s approach of treating our training and apprenticeship systems as simply another employment subsidy.

“That combined with his disastrous approach to temporary work visa’s and allowing Chinese investors to bring their own workforces into Australia shows clearly that his priorities are all wrong.

“Apprentices are not cheap labour. They represent the future capability of the Australian economy and should be treasured and nurtured to their full potential”, said Mr Dettmer.

Apprentices need:

- More support with meeting the cost of living and the growing cost of TAFE fees;
- Better treatment at work and employer compliance with the law relating to the employment of apprentices;
- More support to understand, access and prosecute their rights at work;
- Proper access to TAFE and more opportunities to practice what they learn through structures on-the-job; and
- Credit for skills they already have.

#### **The Facts on Abbott’s Apprentice Record**

- \$1 billion in cuts to apprenticeship programs in the 2014-15 Budget;
- Replaced apprentice *Tools for Your Trade* grants with apprentice debt;
- Rebadged and cut funding to Australian Apprenticeship Centres;
- Abolished the Joint Group Training program;
- Abolished Industry Skills Councils; and
- Abolished the tripartite Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency.

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