



Labour concerns in China FTA misplaced

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Note – this piece was sent as a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 September 2015

Bob Kinnaird and Bob Birrell conclude that the China FTA means labour-market testing (LMT) will be removed for all Chinese nationals on 457 visas (“Under FTA, Chinese workers can avoid labour-market testing”, September 4)

This gives the impression that the FTA will bring a dramatic change and that attacks on the FTA by some union leaders are justified.

In fact, existing legislation only demands LMT in occupations that comprise less than one third of the 457 visa program’s numbers.

Also skipped is the very first paragraph of the FTA’s labour chapter that says the removal of LMT only applies in five specific categories.

This includes Business Visitors – why would any Australian government even consider applying LMT to those seeking a business visa?

And Australia has already removed the legislative requirement for LMT in the other categories for those from New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, the U.S, Chile, Malaysia, Korea and Japan.

Why should China, which buys far more Australian goods and services than any other country, be treated a second-rate partner?

China has also committed to giving Australians better access in these same categories.

In the past year alone China’s economy added spending worth more than half of Australia’s GDP.

It is best-ever access to this market that is being delayed while the focus is being placed on the deal’s extremely limited labour provisions.

Regards,

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