

16 April 2010

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The Secretary
House Standing Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Secretary

Inquiry into Regional Skills Relocation

On Wednesday 17 February 2010 the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, The Hon Julia Gillard MP, asked the Committee on Employment and Workplace Relations to inquire into and report on *regional skills relocation*.

In particular, as outlined in the inquiry's terms of reference, the Committee has been asked to inquire into and report on the applicability of government employment policies to address the skills shortages in regional Australia focusing on opportunities to support the relocation of unemployed workers from areas of high unemployment to areas experiencing skills shortages.

The AWU draws the attention of the Committee to the work of the Natural Resources Employment Taskforce and to recent submissions made to the Taskforce in response to the release of its public discussion paper, *Resourcing the Future*.

The AWU, along with a number of other unions and the ACTU have made submissions addressing the Taskforce discussion paper. The AWU made the following points in its submission which are also relevant to the current deliberations of the Committee concerning regional skills relocation.

In particular these deal with the extraction of workforce information from Industry and developing a more predictable inventory of local skill needs, availability and up-skilling opportunities based on tripartite models; the impact on other industries through resources demand; increased older worker participation as a way to increase the supply of labour in the short term; and the merit of establishing a major city in the Pilbara region of Western Australia serving as a magnet for skilled workers and their families and funding options to support this goal.

The AWU recommended strategies building on its experience with Skills DMC in identifying skill needs and training opportunities and the Queensland Government's Experience Pays Awareness Strategy regarding deployment of older workers.

There are a range of related matters which will be raised by other unions and the ACTU which are shared in principle by the AWU.

These include the merit of establishing a tripartite body covering major resource projects charged with overseeing the development needs of the resources sector; a commitment to local training and the possibility of a training levy; and maximising local content both upstream (eg steel and aluminium) and in downstream metals fabrication offering opportunities for local skills development and future apprentices.

A copy of the AWU's submission to the Taskforce is enclosed.

The AWU stands ready to assist the Committee in its deliberations.

Yours in Unity

Paul Howes
NATIONAL SECRETARY