



TAYLOR: LABOR POLICIES EXACERBATE RURAL DOCTOR SHORTAGES

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Angus Taylor, the Liberal Candidate for Hume, said that Labor's recent rhetoric about restricting 457 visas demonstrated its disregard for regional Australia, and particularly smaller towns west of the Great Dividing Range.

According to Mr Taylor, one commentator has argued that without 457 visas there would not be a doctor west of the Great Dividing Range. Mr Taylor said that while this was "a bit of an exaggeration, it is not too far short of the mark."

Mr Taylor said that the 457 visa in specialised areas serves the Australian economy well but it serves regional economies and communities especially well.

Mr Taylor said:

"In rural and remote places there have been serious problems finding Australians with particular skills, particularly doctors. The 457 visa program – which to date has been strongly supported by both sides of politics– is most widely used in regional Australia, especially in medical services, engineering and specialised skilled trades.

"There are safeguards in the 457 program: an overseas qualified person can only fill the position if it cannot be filled locally, and the positions can only last four years. It can only be renewed if there is no ability to find local labour."

Mr Taylor said:

"Just like many other categories of visa, such as tourist and student visas, there are always attempts to rot the system. And, of course, it is essential that we work furiously on policies to make sure we have skilled Australians filling these positions.

"However, Labor's failure to reassure us that rural Australia will not be adversely affected by their changes demonstrates Labor's lack of connection with regional communities. And I don't see any overseas trained doctors rotting the system. I see them working very hard and contributing enormously to their communities.

"Instead we have grandstanding from Labor about misuse of the 457 visa system, which is clearly designed to demonise people working here from other countries.

"The biggest categories of 457 visa holders are doctors and nurses. We desperately need them. The reasons why we don't have enough Australian-trained medical professionals are well known - and the coalition has plans to address this. However, this will not be fixed overnight. Until then we should be grateful that we can attract

overseas trained people to work here. We have hundreds of overseas doctors working in regional New South Wales, and we are privileged to have them working so hard and contributing to our communities.

“As people who live in our small towns well know, a town without a doctor is a town without a future. Labor policy on the proposed 457 visa restrictions - and its implicit demonising of people who live and work in rural communities on these visas – will simply make it harder in the future for country towns to hold on to their doctors.”

Please contact Angus Taylor on 0413 963 113 for further information.