

Media Release

Construction Forestry Mining & Energy Union

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‘Greed Inc.’ dumps on young Australians

A call from mining executives for the creation of a special northern economic zone permitting the use of temporary overseas labour is a shortsighted response to skills shortage that sells out Australian youth, according to the Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union.

CFMEU National Secretary John Sutton said today’s open letter to the Federal Government from a group led by billionaire Gina Rinehart has exposed the fact that many employers in the sector have no genuine commitment to providing training and employment to unemployed youth, preferring to use cheap, compliant foreign labour to drive down local wages and conditions.

“Here’s a group of some of Australia’s wealthiest mining magnates, who rather than come forward with proposals to invest in training our own people, particularly our youth, are seeking a cut-price solution aimed at fattening their wallets,” Mr Sutton said.

“Mining already has a poor record in training, and a reputation for poaching skilled workers from other sectors. This proposal takes things a step further with a concerted push for an imported, Dubai-style workforce that will be treated as second class citizens.

“It is also telling that major resource companies like Woodside Petroleum refused to sign the letter, raising concerns that the scheme was about developing a low wage solution that would result in foreign workers being paid less than their Australian counterparts.

The resource sector is already one of the most profitable areas of the economy, with the hard work, diligence and skill of Australian workers delivering record profits to the major miners. Making bogus claims that wages threaten future investment is completely false.

“This kind of short sighted policy will only worsen youth unemployment rates around the country, which are also alarmingly high, and take away yet more opportunities for the next generation of Australian workers.

“The solution to skills shortage is simple. Employers need to provide genuine investment in skills training, employ additional apprentices, and look to address issues around excessive hours and family unfriendly employment practices so that the large, untapped pool of available Australian workers can share the benefits of our resource boom.”

For media comment please call John Sutton on 0419 254 180