



**THE HON. SCOTT BUCHHOLZ MP
SHADOW MINISTER FOR SKILLS AND TRAINING
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR WRIGHT**

MEDIA RELEASE

**LABOR PULLS THE PLUG ON APPRENTICESHIP SUPPORT WHILE
THE SKILLS PIPELINE IS ON LIFE SUPPORT**

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The Albanese Labor Government has once again turned its back on small businesses and the apprenticeship system that underpins Australia's future workforce by slashing employer incentives at the very time businesses are struggling to survive.

From January, the support available to employers taking on an apprentice will fall from \$5,000 to just \$4,000 per apprentice, another blow to small businesses already struggling to stay afloat. In the last financial year, almost 15,000 businesses have gone broke under Labor's watch, and this cut risks pushing even more to the wall and taking apprenticeship opportunities down with them.

Shadow Minister for Skills and Training, Scott Buchholz MP, said the decision shows a government that is out of touch with the reality facing business owners and tradies on the ground.

"When the Coalition was in government, apprentice and trainee numbers were at record highs, with more than 428,000 Australians in training. The system was strong, confidence was high, and employers were taking on new apprentices in record numbers," Mr Buchholz said.

"But today, under Labor, there are 107,000 fewer apprentices and trainees in the system, and businesses are under far greater cost pressure. The circumstances have completely changed and so must the response. Now is not the time to cut support. With the skills system in crisis, the government should be strengthening incentives, not winding them back,"

"Wages are going up, and costs for business are going up, especially energy. Compliance is getting harder, and it's more difficult to run a business than ever before,"

"And yet, the only thing going down under Labor is the support for employers who take on apprentices. It's madness."

Mr Buchholz said the Labor Government's ideological opposition to backing employers is driving the nation's skills system into the ground, creating uncertainty and threatening the next generation of tradespeople.

"Labor talks about solving the housing crisis, but we can't build more homes without more tradies. And we can't train more tradies without employers willing and able to take them on," he said.

"Cutting support for employers at a time when the sector is already on life support will only make a bad situation worse."

Mr Buchholz, with the support of peak bodies from right across the country, has called on the Labor Government to urgently reinstate and strengthen employer incentives, given the 1 January deadline, to restore confidence and protect Australia's future workforce.

"This Labor Government has gutted the apprenticeship system, plain and simple," Mr Buchholz said.

"Small businesses are the backbone of our training system. Without them, apprenticeships collapse. Labor must stop the cuts, stop the uncertainty, and start backing Australian employers,"

"If this Labor Government is serious about addressing the skills and housing crises, they need to start by supporting the people who actually employ and train apprentices, not punish them."

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