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Attn: Free Trade Agreement Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
By email: [ia-cepa@dfat.gov.au](mailto:ia-cepa@dfat.gov.au)

**UNITED VOICE'S SUBMISSION TO DFAT ON THE INDONESIA-AUSTRALIA COMPREHENSIVE  
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (IA-CEPA)**

Please find enclosed United Voice's submission to DFAT on the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IA-CEPA).

Yours faithfully

**David McElrea**  
**ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

## **SUBMISSION TO DFAT ON THE INDONESIA-AUSTRALIA COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (IA-CEPA)**

We write in reference to DFAT's request for submissions on its negotiation agenda for the IA-CEPA.

United Voice is a union that represents Australian workers a range of industries, sectors and callings including aged care, disability care and early childhood education. We endorse the submission made by AFTINET, and wish to draw to the Department's attention several matters relating to labour mobility in the care sector.

United Voice strongly opposes the use of seasonal labour arrangements for care-based work, a proposal advanced by the Indonesia-Australia Business Partnership Group's submission.

Care work is relational in character. It requires care providers to develop continuous relationships with care recipients. The transience inherent to seasonal labour arrangements is antithetical to the preconditions for quality care, which rely on relationships with high levels of continuity, trust and consistency.<sup>1</sup>

The Indonesia-Australia Business Partnership Group's submission overstates and mischaracterises skills shortages in the care sector. It has been recognised by the Productivity Commission that the main obstacle to attracting and retaining care workers in Australia is poor quality jobs. Low pay, insecure and casual work, limited career paths and occupational health and safety issues combine to turn skilled and experienced care workers away from the profession. The introduction of rotating workers on short-term visas to perform care work will do nothing to address the systematic deficiencies in the way in which care work is structured and valued in Australia, and is likely to perpetuate existing unsatisfactory arrangements.

We also wish to draw to DFAT's attention the overwhelming evidence of migrant workers being exploited in Australia at the low-paid, precarious end of the labour market. Numerous inquiries by both government and independent bodies have stressed that the mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing employers' compliance with the most basic workplace laws and standards are deficient and under-resourced.

United Voice considers that the expansion of labour mobility arrangements in the caring sector is not appropriate at this time and risks derailing a coherent national workforce development strategy. Before any labour mobility arrangements are considered as part of the IA-CEPA and any other international trade agreement, United Voice recommends the government commit to:

1. Improving job quality in the care sector and encouraging employers to participate in this process
2. Attracting and training and a sustainable care workforce
3. Ensuring that workers on existing visa subclasses are made less vulnerable to exploitation

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Work and Life (2014) *Client Perceptions of Quality Care in Aged Care Services*. September 2014. Accessible at: [http://www.qualityjobsqualitycare.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2014\\_QJQC\\_Perceptions\\_final.pdf](http://www.qualityjobsqualitycare.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2014_QJQC_Perceptions_final.pdf)