TONY Abbott's latest bright idea is to stop unemployment benefits for people under 30 to give them an incentive to solve the skills shortage in the mining and construction sector.

If Mr Abbott is serious about the skills shortage he should be pushing for serious investment in apprenticeships and training. Why not consider the apprenticeships and cadetships of the 1970s - those who were learning got a proper wage and a job.

But worse, his idea runs the risk of exacerbating existing problems and creating new ones. Who will support the under 30s if for good reason they can't relocate? Will responsibility fall on parents already struggling in a context where civic staples like decent public transport, accessible health and dental care have been eroded? What of those without family support? Will they join the already large numbers of young people who are homeless each night?

This idea also diverts attention from unemployment due to oversupply of graduates in other sectors - the law, psychology and so on. What responsibility will the community and the government assume to assist young graduates who thought they were investing in their future only to find that full-time employment in their chosen area was a chimera?

If the opposition is serious about getting young adults into proper jobs, why not tackle real problems like the housing crisis and invest in social housing.

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