



THE SENATE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON WORK AND CARE

Answer to question taken on notice

Public hearing

Friday 7 October 2022, Canberra

Answer from Dr Matt Withers

Question

CHAIR: Do you have reports or data that you've referred to that you could supply to the committee that spell out comparable arrangements in other countries that you've referred to and the implications and consequences of the failure to provide family reunion? That's essentially what you're pointing to as a recommendation—a more eased form of family reunion and more flexibility for the worker in the labour market to be able to leave their initial job. Are these the recommendations you're pointing to, essentially?

Dr Withers: Yes, that's correct—to have the ability to change employer over the duration of that stint of migration in Australia, but also a range of accompanying decent care policies that enable migrant workers to better access the care resources that they need, whether that means facilitating transnational care practices or directly investing in the care capacity of countries of origin in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

CHAIR: Thank you, Dr Withers.

Answer

I herein include a selection of the most relevant of those studies, which offer both evidence and policy recommendations, along with a brief summary of each:

Withers, Matt. 2022. 'Rapid Analysis of Family Separation Issues and Responses in the PALM Scheme – Final Report'. Australian Government.

This is the final report of my recently conducted qualitative study, commissioned by DFAT, into Pacific Island country government staff perspectives on the social impact of family separation within PALM. Includes policy recommendations based on those interviews.

Hill, Elizabeth, Matt Withers, and Rasika Jayasuriya. 2018. 'The Pacific Labour Scheme and Transnational Family Life: Policy Brief'. Policy Brief. Sydney: Markets, Migration and the Work of Care Project.

Policy brief addressing the rights issues and policy options for supporting transnational family life within the PALM scheme (focus on longer-duration Pacific Labour Scheme).

Yeates, Nicola. 2011. 'Going Global: The Transnationalization of Care'. *Development and Change*, 23.

A state-of-the-art summary of the international literature on transnational care practices shaped by temporary labour migration, with high-level policy analysis.

Chattier, Priya. 2019. 'Beyond Development Impact: Gender and Care in the Pacific Seasonal Worker Programme'. *Gender & Development* 27 (1): 49–65.

The only other comprehensive study of the care implications of the PALM scheme (with a focus on the shorter-duration Seasonal Worker Programme).

Jayaweera, Swarna, and Malsiri Dias. 2009. 'Gender Roles and Support Networks of Spouses of Migrant Workers'. In *Gender and Labour Migration in Asia*, 43–115. IOM International Organization for Migration.

Comparative evidence from Sri Lanka, where men and women engage in temporary labour migration to the Persian Gulf under very similar visa restrictions to the PALM scheme. The report details the gender-inequitable distribution of unpaid care work that occurs during migration, along with the formation of care deficits.

Jones, Richard C. 2014. 'Migration and Family Happiness in Bolivia: Does Social Disintegration Negate Economic Well-Being?' *International Migration* 52 (3): 177–93.

Comparative evidence from Bolivia, detailing the detriment to social and economic wellbeing in instances where migration leads to the breakdown of family relationships.