

04 December 2020

Select Committee on Temporary Migration
Attn: Lee Katauskas, Committee Secretary

Dear Lee,

RE: SSC on Temporary Migration Public Hearing on 14 October 2020: Hansard transcript and further evidence – Development Policy Centre submission

Please find below further evidence to evidence provided by the Development Policy Centre to the *Inquiry into the impact temporary migration has on the Australian economy, wages and jobs, social cohesion, and workplace rights and conditions* on 14 October 2020.

Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) reforms

A collated list of reforms proposed to help strengthen and improve the SWP are detailed in Annex 1. As background, please see the attached report “Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries”.

SWP and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) participation

Pacific island country participation for both schemes current at 30 June 2020 for the PLS and 30 January 2020 for the SWP is included in Annex 2.

In addition to this further evidence, research by Prof Stephen Howes on asylum seekers/on-shore protection visa applicants is forthcoming and can be shared once finalised, if useful to the Committee.

If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Kind regards,

Holly Lawton
cc Prof Stephen Howes, Dr Ryan Edwards

Development Policy Centre
Crawford School of Public Policy
Australian National University

Annex 1

Proposed Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) reforms

Proposed reform	Detail	Reference
Improve awareness of the SWP	Improve advertising of the SWP through targeted industry groups, rural media, and an expanded social media presence. Implement a targeted campaign to address common misperceptions about the SWP, drawing on experiences of current AEs and results from existing studies.	Doyle, J & Howes, S 2015, ' Australia's seasonal worker program: demand-side constraints and suggested reforms ', Discussion paper, World Bank Group, Washington, DC.
Changes to Approved Employer contributions to worker mobilisation costs	Cover new workers' costs through a revolving fund, rather than relying on employers to cover costs. Remove the AUD500 employer contribution to the international airfare of returning workers to ease cost concerns, and remove employer contributions to domestic travel.	Curtain, R, Dornan, M, Doyle, J & Howes, S 2016, ' Labour mobility: the ten billion dollar prize ', Pacific Possible series, Background Paper No. 1, World Bank, Washington, DC. Doyle, J & Howes, S 2015, ' Australia's seasonal worker program: demand-side constraints and suggested reforms ', Discussion paper, World Bank Group, Washington, DC.
Streamline administrative processes and requirements	Streamline processing times for the employer applications to participate in the scheme and Approved Employer government reporting requirements. Review labour market testing requirements and remove testing requirements for postcodes that qualify for Working Holiday (subclass 417) second-year visa extensions.	Doyle, J & Howes, S 2015, ' Australia's seasonal worker program: demand-side constraints and suggested reforms ', Discussion paper, World Bank Group, Washington, DC.
Build in greater flexibility for workers and Approved Employers	Reduce the minimum 14 week work requirement and allow workers to move between Approved Employers (NB: portability is currently being trialled in response to COVID-19 labour shortages and restrictions on movement of seasonal labour).	Doyle, J & Howes, S 2015, ' Australia's seasonal worker program: demand-side constraints and suggested reforms ', Discussion paper, World Bank Group, Washington, DC.
Improve bilateral relationships and interactions	Roll out of an annual bilateral monitoring mechanism to address operational issues at a sending-country level. This would complement PLMAM and other existing fora.	Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries. ¹

¹ Report to be launched 9 December 2020 (via [webinar](#)).

	Australia and New Zealand should initiate (separately or preferably jointly) bilateral or trilateral monitoring mechanisms with each sending country to address a range of operational issues in private. New COVID-19 bilateral agreements should be established with willing sending countries.	
Most sending countries need to provide increased resourcing to the governance of labour mobility as numbers grow, both at home and abroad.	Critical government functions which are often under-resourced include: record-keeping; pre-departure briefings; enforcement of punitive measures in response to worker misconduct; and troubleshooting when problems arise abroad. Feedback from employers and workers should be collected and published by major sending countries.	Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries.
Visa changes to incentivise backpackers to work on farms should be reversed.	Either the second year visa extension should be done away with, or it should be made available in return for three months of work in any sector.	Curtain, R, Dornan, M, Doyle, J & Howes, S 2016, Labour mobility: the ten billion dollar prize, Pacific Possible series, Background Paper No. 1, World Bank, Washington, DC. Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries.
Improving industry-wide compliance. Introduction of a national licensing scheme for labour hire companies, with the resources needed to monitor compliance.	Increased funding for compliance activities to reduce the number of illegal workers in horticulture and agriculture would help to incentivise uptake of the SWP and improve worker welfare outcomes.	Curtain, R, Dornan, M, Doyle, J & Howes, S 2016, Labour mobility: the ten billion dollar prize, Pacific Possible series, Background Paper No. 1, World Bank, Washington, DC. Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries
A reference group consisting of approved employers (growers and labour hire operators), and key industry associations should be	Closer engagement between DESE and Approved Employers in the program, and a decision making role for Approved Employers. Establishment of a reference group that represents growers, industry and intermediaries would	Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries.

established. Together with government representatives, this group would be tasked with developing a more collaborative approach to identifying and resolving key problems.	help to ensure the SWP better meets stakeholder needs. Establishment of Approved Employers Association a positive step. Approved Employers should be granted a greater role in worker selection and better represented in the scheme. The reference group should be established now, with an initial mandate to solve SWP-related problems arising from the closure of international and state borders.	Doyle, J & Howes, S 2015, ' Australia's seasonal worker program: demand-side constraints and suggested reforms ', Discussion paper, World Bank Group, Washington, DC.
The SWP should be managed by the federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.	Positioning of the SWP under the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment rather than DESE. The Department of Agriculture is better positioned to identify industry needs and to address them.	Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries.
The Australian Government should place relationship managers, with a brief to resolve problems close to where they occur, in each of the main horticultural areas where SWP workers are most concentrated.	Management of the SWP needs to be decentralised, with a greater role for regions. Relationship managers, based in the regions, need to be engaged to facilitate risk mitigation and more targeted response. Recent budget announcements have seen an additional AUD9m allocated to support such roles over the next three years.	Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries.
Approved employers, either individually or jointly, should have an ongoing presence in the three main sending countries, and should take more responsibility for compliance in relation to the recruitment and preparation of workers.		Curtain, R and Howes, S 2020, Governance of the Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia and sending countries.

Annex 2

Pacific Labour Scheme

PLS visas granted and currently in Australia to 30 June 2020

	Gender	Fiji	Kiribati	Nauru	PNG	Samoa	Solomon Islands	Timor-Leste	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu	Grand Total
Visa grants	Female	38	87	8	2	13	13	22	12	4	41	240
	Male	226	50	16	48	186	128	87	58	51	141	988
	Total	264	137	24	50	199	141	109	70	55	182	1231
	Gender	Fiji	Kiribati	Nauru	PNG	Samoa	Solomon Islands	Timor-Leste	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu	Grand Total
Currently employed in Australia (including redeployed workers)	Female	28	60	4	2	11	8	15	10	3	32	173
	Male	193	33	9	46	165	113	56	54	33	109	811
	Total	221	93	13	48	176	121	71	64	36	141	984

Data supplied: DFAT

Seasonal Worker Programme

SWP participation by country and financial year for life of scheme to 31 January 2020

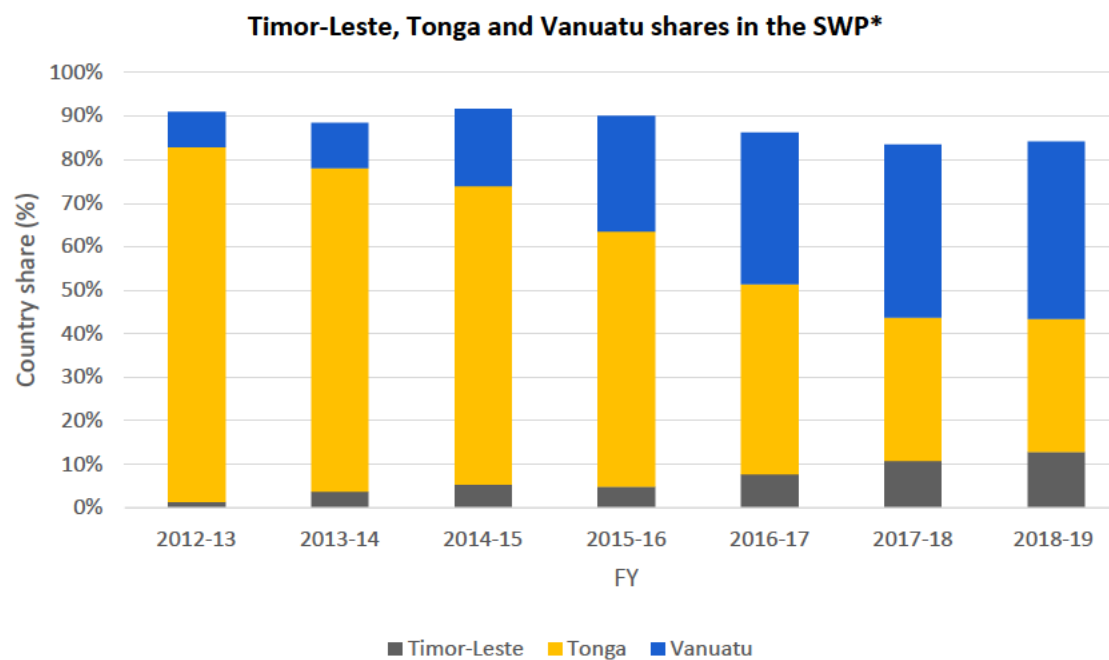
Financial Year of Visa Grant	Fiji	Kiribati	Nauru	Papua New Guinea	Samoa	Solomon Islands	Timor-Leste	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu	Total
2007-08											
2008-09								50		6	56
2009-10		11						56			67
2010-11		18		9				384		12	423
2011-12		22		73	39		12	825		95	1,066
2012-13	0	34	10	26	22	42	21	1,199	0	119	1,473
2013-14	0	14	0	26	162	9	74	1,497	20	212	2,014
2014-15	<5	11	0	35	185	21	168	2,179	7	567	3,177

2015-16	160	20	17	42	140	61	224	2,624	<5	1,198	4,490
2016-17	190	124	0	139	309	87	477	2,691	0	2,149	6,166
2017-18	247	364	0	92	527	175	915	2,790	0	3,349	8,459
2018-19	436	377	0	128	677	314	1,567	3,737	0	4,964	12,200
2019-20 to 31/01/2020	195	102	0	93	432	190	1,360	2,025	0	4,197	8,594
	1,232	1,097	27	663	2,493	899	4,818	20,057	31	16,868	

Data supplied: DESE

* The SWP (2012 to current) was preceded by the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (2008-2012).

The SWP is dominated by three countries – Timor-Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu – that have maintained approximately 85 per cent of the market, or higher, since the scheme started.



Data supplied: DESE

*Complete data for the 2019-20 financial year not currently available.