



THE SENATE

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Answers to spoken Questions on Notice for National Farmers' Federation at a public hearing on 13 April 2023.

What is the data on the longevity of PALM employment relationships? What percentage work out, and don't work out? What number of returning workers would go back to the same employer?

According to the Approved Employers Association, a large proportion of PALM workers try to come back to the same employer, maybe 70 to 80 per cent. The majority of employers would also like to bring the same employee back, and most employees want to come back. They have developed skills and experience on specific farms and have also developed a professional and trusting relationship with the employer.

Do you have examples or data on the connections PALM workers are able to make in local communities?

The government has provided funding to support this occurring which is carried out by an organisation called 'Community Connections'. This organisation is represented in each state and territory, and their job is to link the workers with their local communities. This group is also regularly in touch with the approved employers and have developed and implemented a wide range of PALM worker/community connection programs which are widely considered very successful. The government has clearly invested a number of resources into this space, and it would be a great thing to continue to build on these established connections with pathways to permanent residence.

Are there skilled workers participating in the PALM scheme on an unskilled basis because they see it as a way to have a greater income? Has there been any analysis of that?

We don't know how many qualified people come to Australia, but there are examples of this occurring. This can be prevented from occurring through sound policy design more so than what currently occurs. The problem is well understood, and sending countries can play a far more active role in pre-screening along with the employers. This issue may be exacerbated by pathways to PR but as discussed, mitigation options exist.