

# **FORBIDDEN FRUIT**

## **THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PACIFIC OF SEASONAL CONTRACT LABOUR**



**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE EMPLOYMENT, WORKPLACE  
RELATIONS AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO PACIFIC REGION SEASONAL  
CONTRACT LABOUR**

**BY JEANNE ALLEGRO**

**MAY 2006**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	III
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	IV
1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1. THIS SUBMISSION .....	6
1.2. REASON FOR THIS SUBMISSION .....	6
1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE SUBMISSION .....	8
2. CURRENT MIGRATION PRACTICES.....	10
2.1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW .....	10
2.1.1 International Migration.....	10
2.1.2 Pacific Region Migration.....	11
2.2. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS.....	13
2.2.1 Development .....	13
2.2.2 Population and Employment Pressures .....	15
2.2.3 Family and Community.....	16
3. APPROACHES TO SEASONAL CONTRACT LABOUR .....	19
3.1. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED SCHEME.....	19
3.1.1 Canadian Model .....	20
3.2. INTEREST GROUPS.....	21
3.2.1. The Government .....	22
3.2.2. The Opposition.....	22
3.2.3. Pacific Island Countries.....	23
3.2.4. Development Agencies .....	24
3.2.5. Unions .....	24
3.2.6. Rural Industries.....	25
4. POTENTIAL SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	27
4.1. INCREASED MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES .....	27
4.2. SEASONAL MIGRATION .....	29
4.3. LOW-SKILLED MIGRATION .....	30
4.4. REGULATED MIGRATION .....	30
5. CONCLUSIONS.....	32
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	33

Submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee  
Inquiry into Pacific Region Seasonal Contract Labour

May 2006

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May 2006

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACREJ	Australian Centre for Regional Economic Justice
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AWU	Australian Workers' Union
CSAWP	Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
HAL	Horticulture Australia Ltd.
IMF	International Monetary Fund
J4MW	Justicia/Justice for Migrant Workers
NFF	National Farmers Federation
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PIC	Pacific Island Countries
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
WHM	Working Holiday Maker

May 2006

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee is conducting an inquiry into Pacific Region seasonal contract labour, an issue that has been gaining momentum since the 1980s. While initially proposals for a labour mobility program were put forward by reviews of Australia's aid assistance to the Pacific from a development perspective, renewed interest has stemmed from Australian labour needs and the Pacific's growing reliance on migration and remittances. Responding to calls from the National Farmers Federation (NFF) to consider a seasonal Pacific Islander solution to address severe labour shortages, particularly in the agricultural industry, the inquiry is investigating the extent of the need for labour, the implications for the Australian workforce and rural communities, implementation issues and the effect on Pacific economies. Involved in the inquiry are a range of interest groups, including the Australian and Pacific Island governments, development agencies, labour unions and industry groups.

At first there appears to be a simple logic of a win-win-win situation for Australian agriculture, Pacific Island nations and the migrants themselves. It is not so straightforward. This submission argues for the need to address the social implications for the Pacific of a seasonal labour program, on the basis that the potential positive social outcomes are both a motivator behind the program and a determinant of its success. The potential implications of the proposal have been predicted by reviewing the impact of current worldwide and Pacific migration practices on development, population, employment and social relations in the migrant-sending country. The submission finds that there would be both positive and negative socio-economic effects on the Pacific of increased migration and remittances through a seasonal, low-skilled, regulated migration program, yet overall the benefits outweigh the costs. The submission recommends a pilot program that implements a number of secondary recommendations in order to produce positive social outcomes.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

A pilot program to trial seasonal, low-skilled and regulated migration should be developed with specific attention to the social implications for the Pacific.

Program should be linked to Australia's aid program in the Pacific to ensure the beneficial development outcomes of migration and remittances are maximised.

Program should develop mechanisms for minimising negative social impacts, for example monitoring the psychological stress of children and providing counselling, mentoring programs and support groups.

A maximum length of absence should be imposed to ensure workers are not separated from their families for extended periods of time.

Program should be based on seasonal contracts with the expectation of return the following year to reduce overstaying and ensure sustainable incomes, while limiting the separation of migrants from their families.

Program should make useful skill transfers from Australia to the Pacific a priority.

Program should have built-in protections against exploitation and abuse.

May 2006

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Program should target the most disadvantaged Pacific Islanders to benefit the poorest and avoid intensifying the brain-drain.

Further research needs to be undertaken to understand the social implications of seasonal migration.

Further research needs to be undertaken to understand the social implications of seasonal migration, following the establishment of the pilot program. The research should include extensive monitoring of the social impacts and continued reassessment of the costs and benefits.

May 2006

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. THIS SUBMISSION

This submission is made by Jeanne Allegro, an independent undergraduate researcher from the Australian National University with an academic and humanitarian interest in the Pacific Islands. The Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee Inquiry into Pacific Region seasonal contract labour is considering the use of Pacific region labour to fill the seasonal employment requirements of Australian agricultural industries. This submission addresses the term of reference (e); the effects of the scheme on the economies of Pacific nations, from the socio-economic perspective of the Pacific Islands. It recommends further research into the social implications of temporary, low-skilled Pacific migration to Australia. In particular it recommends the design and establishment of a pilot program to anticipate potential problems and maximise benefits for both Pacific Islanders and Australia.

### 1.2. REASON FOR THIS SUBMISSION

It is important for the inquiry to consider the social implications of the scheme within the Pacific region, as this submission will establish that good social outcomes are both a main reason behind the proposal and a determinant of its success. There has been much attention given to the implications for farmers and rural communities in Australia, but little emphasis on the effect on the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> This follows the general trend in migration research towards studying receiving countries and migrants exclusively. Thus, there remains a significant knowledge gap concerning the impact on the social structure and development of the sending country when large numbers of young workers emigrate overseas.<sup>2</sup>

The final term of reference, the effects of the scheme on the economies of Pacific nations, cannot be separated from its potential social effects. In the past, migration has often been misunderstood by analysts and policymakers, due to incorrect assumptions from rigid disciplinary boundaries that close off economic from social approaches.<sup>3</sup> The failure of nation-states to anticipate continuing flows of migration and their inability to successfully implement control strategies is due to the nature of globalisation, but most significantly to the inadequate attention being paid to the free will of migrants.<sup>4</sup> Migration cannot be explained in purely economic terms; rather it is a collective process based on the needs and strategies of families first, then communities and nations. Legal and bureaucratic barriers to migration are only some of the many factors that determine family survival strategies, which defy economic predictions. The social outcomes of the scheme in the Pacific will determine its overall success: the take-up rate, the satisfaction of the workers

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1 Reflected in the terms of reference for the inquiry, 4 of 5 of which are focussed on Australia. See Appendix 1.

2 Stephen Castles. 2002. "Migration and community formation under conditions of globalization." *International Migration Review*. 36(4) p1145; Hein De Haas. 2005. "International Migration, Remittances and Development: myths and facts." *Third World Quarterly*. 26(8) p1269; Helen Ware. 2005. "Demography, Migration and Conflict in the Pacific." *Journal of Peace Research*. 42(4) p445.

3 Stephen Castles. 2002. "Migration and community formation under conditions of globalization." p.1145.

4 *Ibid*, p1146.

May 2006

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and the rates of return. The inquiry is not only considering importing labour, but importing people too.

Social outcomes are also a major motivation behind the inquiry. Most interest groups use aid and development justifications to target the Pacific region as a seasonal labour force. The potential socio-economic implications of the program for the Pacific should therefore be given equal consideration in the inquiry, rather than the current disproportionate interest in Australian labour shortages expressed by the committee.<sup>5</sup> There is a history of proposals for Pacific labour mobility dating back to the 1980s that have been successively dismissed by the government of the time. The 1984 review of overseas aid, the Jackson report, recommended that Australia adapt its assistance to deal with the unique problems of the Pacific by establishing a special immigration program.<sup>6</sup> The 1997 Simons review suggested that migration may be more cost-effective than endless aid.<sup>7</sup> A pilot program was again recommended by the 2003 Senate Foreign Affairs Committee<sup>8</sup> and the 2005 *AusAID Core Group Recommendations Report*,<sup>9</sup> but rejected by the Government.

Labour migration as aid has not only been considered by Australia. The Pacific Island Forum's *Pacific Plan*<sup>10</sup> and various Pacific Island countries<sup>11</sup> (PIC) have appealed for greater access to Australia's labour market. In addition, the Asian Development Bank<sup>12</sup> (ADB) and the World Bank<sup>13</sup> have published research on the role of remittances from migration in alleviating poverty. This current Senate inquiry reflects not only pressure from farming lobby groups to meet labour shortages but the culmination of past recommendations, research and lobbying on the role of Pacific labour mobility as effective aid for socio-economic development.

Seasonal contract labour will not fix all of the Pacific region's problems, but it has the potential to materially benefit considerable numbers of workers and their families. Greater access to the Australian labour market creates new opportunities for unskilled workers, and thus the program should be viewed as a way to advance economic and social welfare in Pacific Island communities as a complement to Australia's official development assistance program. If the inquiry is conducted on this basis, achieving the best social

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5 Senator Judith Troeth. 29 March 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra.

6 G Jackson. 1984. Report of the Committee to Review the Australian Overseas Aid Program. Canberra: AGPS.

7 The Australian Overseas Aid Program. April 1997. One Clear Objective: Poverty Reduction through Substantial Development: Report of the Committee of Review.

8 Australian Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Parliamentary Committee Report. 2003. A Pacific Engaged: Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea and the island states of the South-West Pacific. Canberra.

9 AusAID (prepared by Ron Duncan and James Gilling). 2005a. Core Group Recommendations Report: For a White Paper on Australia's aid program. Commonwealth of Australia.

10 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIF). 2005. The Pacific Plan: For Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration. Suva, Fiji.

11 Dateline. 15 June 2005. "The Real Pacific Solution"; Hugh White. 10 October 2005. "Visa call will test commitment to a Pacific community." Sydney Morning Herald. p11.

12 John Connell and Richard Brown. 2005. Remittances in the Pacific: An Overview. Manila: Asian Development Bank.

13 World Bank. 2006. Global Economic Prospects 2006: The Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration. Washington: World Bank.



May 2006

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consequences of Australia's actions in the Pacific should be central in its recommendations. This submission aims to demonstrate to the inquiry the social implications of past migration flows to anticipate the possible effects of the proposed scheme.

### 1.3. STRUCTURE OF THE SUBMISSION

This submission begins in Chapter 2 with a global overview of current migration practices and, more specifically, migration from the Pacific. The research into the social implications of these migration flows on the Pacific is reviewed, focussing on the role of remittances and the impact on development, population, employment and social relations. The proposed scheme is introduced in Chapter 3 with an analysis of the differences between past Pacific migration and seasonal, low-skilled labour migration to Australia. The agendas of the different stakeholders involved in the inquiry are introduced and their claims are assessed from the perspective of good social outcomes for the Pacific. In Chapter 4, the potential social implications of the program's increased, seasonal, low-skilled and regulated migration are predicted from past Pacific Island migratory experience and other seasonal labour schemes, in particular the Canadian model. These implications are followed by recommendations to improve the results for the workers and their families. Chapter 5 summarises and concludes the submission with general recommendations to the inquiry.

It is necessary to define key terminology used in this submission and to justify what has been excluded. Important issues in studying migration include the types of migration flows, the role of globalisation and remittances. Seasonal migration is used in this submission as distinct from both temporary and permanent migration, to be as specific as possible about timeframes and intentions. Unfortunately, the length of the season has not been specified by farming groups or by the inquiry,<sup>14</sup> and often migration literature makes no distinction between seasonal and temporary movements of people. There are also negative connotations associated with terms such as 'guestworkers' and 'overstayers'<sup>15</sup> that the submission tries to avoid by using 'migrant workers' and other alternatives.

Recent interest in the phenomenon of globalisation has brought processes like international migration and transnational communities to the attention of policy makers,<sup>16</sup> but these need to be linked to the realities of particular places. This submission has paid attention to differences in scale when comparing the Canadian model and other country's international migration with small Pacific Island states. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the diversity of the Pacific region and endeavour to avoid generalisations.

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14 There is a conspicuous absence of a specified timeframe, both for the season and the length of the program, in the inquiry information and submissions from agricultural groups.

15 See Hughes derogatory use of 'guestworkers' and 'overstayers' in Helen Hughes. 2003b. "Helping the Islands to Help Themselves." *Quadrant Magazine*. 47(7-8).

16 Graeme Hugo. 2004. "Australia: The Continent of Immigrants." In Maura I. Toro-Morn, and Marixsa Alicea (eds.), *Migration and Immigration*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press. p15.

May 2006

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The term remittances will be used in this submission to describe the transfers, in cash or in kind, from a migrant to their families and communities in the country of origin.<sup>17</sup> Finally, this submission will not deal with the operational logistics of the scheme in detail, which can be finalised after the Senate findings are published.

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17 Ildelfonso Bagasao, Ma. Elena B. Picio, Ma. Lourdes T. Lopez, and Peter Djinis (ADB Consultants). July 2005. Technical Assistance Final Report: Enhancing the Efficiency of Overseas Workers Remittances. Asian Development Bank. p3.

May 2006

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## 2. CURRENT MIGRATION PRACTICES

It is important to investigate the social implications on the sending country of current migration flows globally, and specifically from the Pacific Region, in order to anticipate the potential impact of a seasonal contract labour program on the Pacific. This chapter of the submission gives a historical overview of international migration and a focus on past movements of Pacific Islanders, followed by a review of the impact of remittances and migration on development, population, employment and social relations.

### 2.1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

#### 2.1.1 International Migration

Globalisation has seen the international movement of people emerge as a defining characteristic of the modern era and a force of social transformation. The number of people living outside their countries of birth was estimated in 2005 at almost 191 million, up from 176 million in 2000.<sup>18</sup> Two main models of official migration have developed in the literature—the settler model of assimilation and the temporary migration model.<sup>19</sup> Within these models lie skilled and low-skilled migration programs and the sending and receiving countries involved. Yet distinctions become blurred when it is recognised that all forms of migration are interdependent and tend to stimulate each other, while the increasing incidence of circular migration denies a simplified model.<sup>20</sup>

There are many explanations for why international migration occurs. Neo-classical economics views individual expectations of economic opportunity as the dominant reason, but many other factors have important roles. The decision-making process of the potential migrant takes into account considerations of security and sustainability, the effect upon social networks and their knowledge of the receiving society.<sup>21</sup> The choices of families responding to inadequacies in basic human needs are balanced against a checklist of cost-benefit analyses.<sup>22</sup> Thus, demographic and sociological reasoning contributes to the occurrence of international migration.

The most significant, direct, immediate and far-reaching benefit of international migration for sending countries is the return flow of remittances.<sup>23</sup> The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has found that global remittances are now over double the value of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and second only to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a source of external funding for developing countries.<sup>24</sup> Tending to be more predictable and

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18 United Nations. 2006. "Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2005 Revision." Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

19 Stephen Castles. 2002. "Migration and community formation under conditions of globalization." p1143.

20 Ibid, p1152.

21 Ibid, p1150.

22 Richard C Jones. 1998. "Remittances and inequality: a question of migration stage and geographic scale." *Economic Geography*. 74(1). p9.

23 Ildefonso Bagasao et al. July 2005. Technical Assistance Final Report: Enhancing the Efficiency of Overseas Workers Remittances. p1.

24 International Monetary Fund (IMF). 2005. Sending Money Home: Trends in Migrant Remittances. Finance and Development, International Monetary Fund. 42(4).

May 2006

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stable than both these sources, remittances also operate counter-cyclically by increasing in times of crisis. In 2005, the World Bank officially recorded remittances globally as in excess of US\$232 billion, US\$167 billion (72 percent) of which went to developing countries.<sup>25</sup> Unrecorded remittances sent through non-official channels are estimated to add at least another 50 percent to those figures.<sup>26</sup> These funds play an essential role in the economic and social structure of developing nations, providing foreign exchange straight to citizens for immediate consumption, poverty alleviation and investment.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1.2 Pacific Region Migration

International labour migration has a long history in the Pacific Islands. From the colonial era's 'blackbirding'<sup>28</sup> to present labour practices, the movement of people has had a significant impact on the region's development and established an international diaspora of Pacific Islanders.<sup>29</sup> There are large numbers of Fijians working in Iraq and Kuwait as security guards and labourers,<sup>30</sup> sailors from i-Kiribati and Tuvalu work in ships all over the world, and Tongan and Fijian builders, nurses and teachers take up positions in Australia and New Zealand. A high proportion of Pacific Islanders now live overseas and remittances are an essential part of the economy of many nations such as Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Niue, Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Cook Islands. Indeed, in Tonga remittances comprise 31 percent of the gross domestic product (see Table 1). Most of this migration is considered skilled and permanent, leading to concerns about the loss of skilled labour (the brain-drain). In Polynesia, the average emigration rate is 48.7 percent, and 75.2 percent of skilled workers have left.<sup>31</sup> Emigration is highly valued for social and economic reasons and can be interpreted as an individual and nation-state solution toward problems in the Pacific. This strategy was criticised for creating economies reliant on migration, remittances, aid and bureaucracy (known as MIRAB economies).<sup>32</sup> However

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- 25 World Bank. 2006. *Global Economic Prospects 2006: The Economic Implications of Remittances and Migration*. pxiii..
- 26 *Ibid*, pxiii.
- 27 Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM). 2005. *Migration in an interconnected world: New directions for action*. Global Commission on International Migration.
- 28 Blackbirding refers to the coercive use of Pacific labour in agricultural industries in Queensland. For example see Wal Bird. 2005. *Me no go Mally Bulla: recruiting and blackbirding in the Queensland labour trade 1863-1906*. ACT: Ginninderra Press; Adrian Graves. 1992. *Cane and labour: the political economy of the Queensland sugar industry, 1862-1906*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- 29 Not all Pacific Islands have taken the international migration path. The Melanesian Islands, without colonial ties, have had no access to international labour markets and have struggled to deal with the ensuing problems of employment and social instability. Former colonies have stronger economies and higher indicators of social development due to large transfers from their former colonial rulers as well as access to their labour markets. See Satish Chand. 2005. "Labour mobility for sustainable livelihood in Pacific Island States." *Pacific Economic Bulletin*. 20(3). p8.
- 30 For a comprehensive discussion of Fijians recruited to the Middle East see John Connell, 2006, "Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific. Old Wine in Bigger Bottles?" Australian National University Conference Paper. University of Sydney, NSW. p10-12.
- 31 Frédéric Docquier and Abdeslam Marfouk. "International Migration by Education Attainment, 1990-2000." In Çağlar Özden and Maurice Schiff (eds.) *International Migration, Remittances, and the Brain Drain*. World Bank and Palgrave Macmillan. p170-1.
- 32 Bertram, I. G., and R. F. Watters. 1985. "The MIRAB Economy in South Pacific Microstates." *Pacific Viewpoint* 26(3).

May 2006

recent research on island economies and the circular nature of international movement and networks has reappraised migration as a relatively successful form of development.<sup>33</sup>

**Table 1: Pacific Economic Indicators (2004)**

	GDP (US\$ millions)	GNI per capita, Atlas method (US\$)	Official development assistance (US\$ millions)	Workers' remittances received (US\$ millions)	Remittances as share of GDP (%)*
Fiji	2,627	2,720	64	24	0.9
Kiribati	62	970	17	7	11.3
PNG	3,909	560	266	6	1.5
Samoa	375	1,840	31	45	12
Solomon Is.	258	560	122	2	0.8
Tonga	213	1,860	19	66	31
Vanuatu	316	1,390	38	9	2.8
Australia	637,326	27,070	..	2,744	0.4

World Bank: World Development Indicators database

\*Calculated by the author.

Emigration is primarily a response to inequalities in social and economic opportunities between the Pacific and host nations.<sup>34</sup> A combination of uneven development, weak and volatile economies, excessive bureaucracies, aid dependence, the exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation, high unemployment, urbanisation and population growth (see Tables 1 and 2) has left most Pacific Island states struggling to provide social services, security and basic infrastructure to their citizens.<sup>35</sup> Recent governance problems in Fiji and the Solomon Islands<sup>36</sup> and enduring poverty in the region, despite receiving the highest levels of development aid per capita in the world, is testament to the deterioration of the region.<sup>37</sup> It is unsurprising that the Pacific region is encouraging large-scale international migration to diminish and defer internal problems.

33 John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 24(1).

34 Ibid, p57; Terrie L. Walmsley, S. Amer Ahmed, and Christopher Parsons. 2005. "The Impact of Liberalizing Labour Mobility in the Pacific Region: An Asian Development Bank – Commonwealth Secretariat Joint Report to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat." *Pacific Studies Series: Toward a New Pacific*. 3(17). p2.

35 AusAID. 2004. *Pacific Regional Aid Strategy: 2004-2009*. Commonwealth of Australia. p12-15; John Connell. 2006. "Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific. Old Wine in Bigger Bottles?"; Victoria S. Lockwood. 2004. "The Global Imperative and Pacific Island Societies." In Victoria S. Lockwood (ed.), *Globalization and Culture Change in the Pacific Islands*, New Jersey: Pearson Education.

36 Mark Baker. 20 April 2006. "How did it come to this?" *The Age*. Melbourne: Australia.

37 John Connell. 2006. "Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific. Old Wine in Bigger Bottles?" pg 3; and Terrie L. Walmsley et al. 2005. "The Impact of Liberalizing Labour Mobility in the Pacific Region: An Asian Development Bank – Commonwealth Secretariat Joint Report to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat." p2.

May 2006

**Table 2: Pacific Demographic and Development Indicators (2004)**

	Population '000s	Annual population growth %	Fertility rate (births per woman)	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult Literacy rate (% of people 15 and above)	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)
Fiji	841	0.9	2.8	68.1	92.9	16
Kiribati	98	1.5	..	..	..	49
PNG	5,772	2.0	3.9	56.0	57.3	68
Samoa	184	0.8	4.0	70.3	..	25
Solomon Islands	466	2.6	4.1	62.7	..	34
Tonga	102	0.4	3.4	72.5	98.9	20
Vanuatu	207	2.0	4.0	69.2	74.0	32

World Bank: World Development Indicators database.

## 2.2. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The social implications of international migration internationally and specifically in the Pacific can be broadly categorised into the impact of remittances and migration on development, demography, social relations and the labour market.

### 2.2.1 Development

International migration affects development in the Pacific by giving Islanders the opportunity to earn an income far above local wages and to use their savings and remittances to contribute to poverty alleviation at home. Migration and remittances can act as a safety net for the poor, as an independent source of income that bypasses state infrastructure to flow direct to the impoverished.<sup>38</sup> While more redistributive than other international transfers such as aid, certain individuals, communities and nations may miss out on opportunities for migration and remittances.<sup>39</sup> There is no clear agreement in the literature on the impact of the migration-remittance nexus on local income distribution. Inequality functions with many contributing factors, and empirical data from diverse contexts can give many different pictures of improved or worsened income distribution.<sup>40</sup> Exactly how migration produces development benefits is dependent on how remittances

38 Hein De Haas. 2005. "International Migration, Remittances and Development: myths and facts." p1277.

39 Robert E.B. Lucas. 2005. *International Migration and Economic Development: Lessons from Low-Income Countries*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar. p265-7; and Richard C. Jones. 1998. "Remittances and inequality: a question of migration stage and geographic scale." p15.

40 For example, Small's study in Tonga found that remittances were partly to blame for income inequality at the village level, while more recent empirical studies such as Ahlburg's have challenged this view. See Dennis Ahlburg. 1991. *Remittances and Their Impact: A Study of Tonga and Western Samoa*. Pacific Policy Paper No. 7. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University p40-2; Cathy Small. 1997. *Voyages: From Tongan Villages to American Suburbs*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. p134.

May 2006

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are managed by their recipients and how the nation-state creates conditions for development and investment.

The first major concern regarding remittances and development is the spending of remittances. There are a number of choices for spending remittances that are influenced by the migrant, as well as by traditional cultural duties: to invest in productive activities, to save for the future or to spend on immediate consumption.<sup>41</sup> Typically, remittances are used to buy basic needs, cancel debts, build modern houses, purchase land and perpetuate further international migration.<sup>42</sup> Many economists are critical of what they view as the unproductive use of an estimated 90 percent of global remittances on consumer goods rather than investment for economic development.<sup>43</sup> In the Pacific especially, changing consumption patterns have led to a reliance on imported foodstuffs.<sup>44</sup> This assessment is dependent on what is considered productive—improvements in nutrition and housing, and investments in social capital such as education, use remittances to develop communities but may be considered conspicuous spending.<sup>45</sup> In the Pacific, a significant proportion of remittances are spent on European style house construction and supporting customs and obligations, partly reflecting a lack of local investment opportunities as well as demonstrating socio-economic status.<sup>46</sup> This consumption has multiplier effects in the local community and can be construed as an investment against uncertainty by maintaining social relations.<sup>47</sup> Governments can exert some influence over the impact of remittances on development through controlling the legal and regulatory economic environment. Increasing the accessibility of banking services and ease of official remittance transfers, supporting financial literacy programs and linking remittances to small and medium business development and microfinance serves to funnel remittances into investment.<sup>48</sup>

The second issue in the relationship between remittances and development is the long-term sustainability of the resource flow. The future of Pacific economies is uncertain if reliant on constant remittances from migrants over successive generations, allowing governments to defer structural macroeconomic reforms. The remittance-decay

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41 John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean." p67.

42 For an in-depth study on remittance use in the Pacific see John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean." 64-70.

43 Michelle Wucker. 2004. "Remittances: the perpetual migration machine." *World Policy Journal*. 21(2). p44.

44 John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean." p64.

45 Hein De Haas. 2005. "International Migration, Remittances and Development: myths and facts." p1274.

46 John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean." p67; Helen Morton. 1996. *Becoming Tongan: An Ethnography of Childhood*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. p33.

47 John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean." p63.

48 The Multilateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank has provided multilateral support for the migration and development nexus through these programs for remittance transfers between the United States and Mexico. See Ildefonso Bagasao et al. July 2005. *Technical Assistance Final Report: Enhancing the Efficiency of Overseas Workers Remittances*. p2-4.

May 2006

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hypothesis,<sup>49</sup> which suggests a decline due to lower migration rates, recession and a decrease in migrants' desire to remit, presents a doomsday scenario for Pacific Island governments dependent on remittance funds to support their populations. Studies have again produced conflicting results with either a high, ongoing level of remittances or a significant decline over time.<sup>50</sup> Case studies in the Pacific of Tongan and Samoan migrants in Australia have found the assumptions regarding migrant's remittance behaviour in the decaying remittance scenario to be unsubstantiated, revealing that remittances are not only driven by the need for family support but by the migrant's income level and desire to invest in their country of birth.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, Morton Lee's study of second-generation Tongans in Melbourne suggests that Australian born children remit at lower levels and exhibit more individualism and less 'belonging' to a transnational community than their parents.<sup>52</sup>

## 2.2.2 Population and Employment Pressures

Migration and remittances often serve to ease population pressure and unemployment. In the Pacific, a lack of land, environmental degradation, growing urbanisation, high population growth and limited employment opportunities combine to threaten social stability.<sup>53</sup> The rate of population growth remains high in most Pacific states, differing significantly only through emigration not fertility rates.<sup>54</sup> The 'youth bulge' occurring in the Pacific, where 40 percent of island populations are aged 0–15 years, will ensure that population growth and consequent population pressure continues for the next generation.<sup>55</sup> Local employment cannot keep up with the demand for jobs. In 2000, the Solomon Islands formal sector employment consisted of 14300 jobs, less than 15 percent of the total working-age population.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, data from 2005 shows that the 17000 school leavers every year in Fiji have to compete for only 5000 new jobs created yearly, resulting in an annual 12000 new unemployed.<sup>57</sup> Increasingly, these pressures have been eased by access to overseas labour markets for employment.

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49 Richard Brown. 1997. "Estimating Remittances Functions for Pacific Island Migrants." *World Development*. 25(4). p623.

50 Eva Østergaard-Nielsen. 2003. "International Migration and Sending Countries: Key Issues and Themes." In Eva Østergaard-Nielsen (ed.), *International Migration and Sending Countries: Perceptions, Policies and Transnational Relations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

51 Richard Brown. 1998. "Do migrants' remittances decline over time? Evidence from Tongans and Western Samoans in Australia." *The Contemporary Pacific*. 10(1); and Richard Brown. 1997. "Estimating Remittances Functions for Pacific Island Migrants."

52 Helen Morton Lee. 2004. "All Tongans Are Connected: Tongan Transnationalism." In Victoria S. Lockwood (ed.), *Globalization and Culture Change in the Pacific Islands*, New Jersey: Pearson Education.

53 Satish Chand. 2005. "Labour mobility for sustainable livelihood in Pacific Island States." p4-11; Helen Ware. 2005. "Demography, Migration and Conflict in the Pacific."

54 Overall, the Pacific has seen an annual population growth rate of 2.2 percent between 1994 and 2004 despite international migration, with the total population reaching 8.6 million in 2004. At this rate the region's population is expected to double in 28 years. See Gerald Haberkorn. July 2004. "Current Pacific population dynamics and recent trends." SPC Demography/Population Programme. p1.

55 World Bank. 2005. "Defining features of Pacific Island countries." Pacific Islands REF Report #32261-EAP. p8.

56 Satish Chand. 2005. "Labour mobility for sustainable livelihood in Pacific Island States." p9.

57 Fijian Labour Minister Kenneth Zinck, quoted on Dateline. 15 June 2005. "The Real Pacific Solution."



May 2006

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The impact of migration on demography and the labour supply in the Pacific is still fiercely debated. Exporting young workers, most of which would probably be men, may solve the demographic imbalance of the youth bulge but alternatively could create an excess of women and the aged. Many small island states face the prospect of depopulation and the loss of cultural identity. Labour supply within the islands is affected by both the loss in skilled workers and the changes to remittance-receiving locals. The attraction of higher wages and professional enhancement results in a loss of valuable human resources in the Pacific, affecting health-care systems in particular. A 2005 World Bank report found that 75 percent of all university graduates from Tonga and Samoa and 62 percent of graduates from Fiji have emigrated, and that Australia is the world's biggest beneficiary with a net brain-gain of 1.4 million people, 11.4 percent of the Australian adult workforce.<sup>58</sup> The benefits of education gained through remittances may only lead to perpetual labour migration and a brain drain if the labour market at home continues to stagnate, as in the Philippines.<sup>59</sup> In addition, migration has been found to affect the productivity of remittance-receivers by reducing their labour in local markets and substituting that income for more leisure time.<sup>60</sup> Moving from subsistence living to dependence on remittances can change farming practices and land-usage options, as well as encouraging urbanisation. Yet new understandings of circular migration and its potential for brain-gain, as well as the huge benefits in reducing unemployment, offset these costs at least in the short-term.<sup>61</sup>

### 2.2.3 Family and Community

The implications of migration and remittances on families, social structures and cultural obligations are inadequately researched and difficult to quantify,<sup>62</sup> but trends throughout the world and in the Pacific can be identified. The cost of family separation on relationships and children is significant, though specific impacts appear to change in different contexts. A rising incidence of divorce, extramarital relationships, single parent families and juvenile delinquency was found in remittance-dependent communities in the Dominican Republic.<sup>63</sup> In the Philippines, studies have found that marriage and family life has remained relatively stable in some cases, while marriage breakdown and child misbehaviour was common in others, due to physical separation over long periods and

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58 Tim Colebatch. 25 October 2005. "Australia worst culprit in 'brain drain' scourge." *The Age*. Melbourne, Australia.

59 Filomeno V Aguilar, Jr. 2002. "Beyond Stereotypes: Human Subjectivity in the Structuring of Global Migrations." In Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr. (ed.) *Filipinos in Global Migrations: At Home in the World?* Quezon City: Philippine Migration Research Network. p28.

60 Edgard R. Rodriguez and Erwin R. Tiongson. 2001. "Temporary Migration Overseas and Household Labor Supply: Evidence from Urban Philippines." *International Migration Review*. 35(3). p709.

61 The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports there are increasing trends, especially in Asia, towards a shift from brain drain to brain gain and circular migration. International Organization for Migration (IOM). 2005. *World Migration: Costs and Benefits of International Migration*. Volume 3 – IOM World Migration Report Series. Geneva, Switzerland. p19, 288.

62 Robert E.B. Lucas. 2005. *International Migration and Economic Development: Lessons from Low-Income Countries*. p268-9.

63 Howard J Wiarda. 1994. "The Economic Effects of Emigration: The Dominican Republic." In Beth J. Asch (ed.), *Emigration and Its Effect on the Sending Country*. Santa Monica, California: Rand. p177.

May 2006

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difficulties maintaining communication.<sup>64</sup> Although determining the effect of a migrant parent on family and child-rearing outcomes is difficult, absentee parenting and the fostering of children during migration to relatives has led to resentment, discipline problems, negative impacts on education, high rates of depression and even suicide attempts among children in the Philippines<sup>65</sup> and in the Pacific.<sup>66</sup> In some cases the only attachment formed between parents and children is a monetary, non-emotional bond that deprives children of supervision, guidance and role models.<sup>67</sup> While globalisation has increased the possibilities for migrants to live transnational lives through improved technologies for communication and sending remittances,<sup>68</sup> when parents and children actually negotiate the concept of transnationalism the effects are more complex.

Migration and remittances can change societies and cultures by transforming and transferring ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital from the migration experience in the host country home. 'Social remittances'<sup>69</sup> refer to the political intentions attached to remittances, new business practices and changing gender relations, and can have an unsettling impact by challenging traditional cultural and ideological values.<sup>70</sup> While emigrants from the Pacific give up their voting rights,<sup>71</sup> there is some evidence of migrants overseas supporting political change at home, such as the pro-democracy movement in Tonga.<sup>72</sup> The Taimi 'o Tonga (Times of Tonga) newspaper published in Auckland, New Zealand, which criticises the government and corruption by the King, was banned by the King of Tonga in 2003.<sup>73</sup> Online diasporic communities such as Planet Tonga host forums on current events, government and political issues affecting Tonga, with posts comparing democracy in the US with Tonga.<sup>74</sup> Migration may also play a role in facilitating changed gender roles, as it has in the Caribbean<sup>75</sup> and the Philippines.<sup>76</sup> Women's increased participation in the labour force while their husbands work overseas and their greater role in managing household resources and remittances have had

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- 64 Joaquin L Gonzalez. 1998. *Philippine Labour Migration: Critical Dimensions of Public Policy*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies; James A Tyner. 2004. "The Philippines: The Dilemma of Philippine International Labor Migration." In Toro-Morn, Maura I., and Marixsa Alicea (eds.), *Migration and Immigration*. Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press. p97-9.
- 65 Filomeno V Aguilar, Jr. 2002. "Beyond Stereotypes: Human Subjectivity in the Structuring of Global Migrations." p25-9.
- 66 Helen Morton Lee. 2004. "All Tongans Are Connected: Tongan Transnationalism."
- 67 Joaquin L Gonzalez. 1998. *Philippine Labour Migration: Critical Dimensions of Public Policy*. p97.
- 68 Hein De Haas. 2005. "International Migration, Remittances and Development: myths and facts." p1273.
- 69 Peggy Levitt. 1996. *Social Remittances: A Conceptual Tool for Understanding Migration and Development*. Working Paper Series Number 96.04. p1.
- 70 Juan Flores. 2005. "The diaspora strikes back: reflections on cultural remittances." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 39(3).
- 71 Helen Ware. 2005. "Demography, Migration and Conflict in the Pacific." p446.
- 72 Helen Lee. 2004. "'Second generation' Tongan transnationalism: Hope for the future?" *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*. 45(2). p240-3.
- 73 Index on Censorship. 2006. "Pro-democracy activist banned for news weekly." *Index on Censorship*.
- 74 Planet Tonga. 2006. "Forums Index." Planet Tonga.
- 75 Howard J Wiarda. 1994. "The Economic Effects of Emigration: The Dominican Republic." p178.
- 76 James A Tyner. 2004. "The Philippines: The Dilemma of Philippine International Labor Migration."

May 2006

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profound effects on traditional attitudes towards the place of women in society.<sup>77</sup> Finally, remittances from migration upset social structures by allowing greater social mobility and forming new migrant social hierarchies of inequality at the local level.<sup>78</sup>

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77 Howard J Wiarda. 1994. "The Economic Effects of Emigration: The Dominican Republic."

78 Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham. 2002. "Situating Migrants in Theory: The Case of the Filipino Migrant Contract Construction Workers." In Filomeno V. Aguilar, Jr. (ed.) *Filipinos in Global Migrations: At Home in the World?* Quezon City: Philippine Migration Research Network p55; Richard C Jones. 1998. "Remittances and inequality: a question of migration stage and geographic scale." p9.

May 2006

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### 3. APPROACHES TO SEASONAL CONTRACT LABOUR

#### 3.1. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED SCHEME

The inquiry is considering seasonal contract labour to meet rural labour shortages in Australia and to help the economic development of Pacific nations.<sup>79</sup> This would be an official migration program for unskilled agricultural workers from Pacific nations receiving Australian aid in a highly regulated environment for a specified period of time, probably with the expectation of return the following year. The proposal differs from past Pacific migration by being housed in a controlled program matching unskilled workers to specific industries and employers for seasonal periods, in contrast to the skilled, permanent migration of limited numbers of Islander professionals and their families to nations of the Pacific Rim. The program would give the most needy Pacific Islanders access to previously denied labour markets in Australia and thus a valuable option for income generation without requiring permanent migration. These restrictions have the potential to eliminate the instability of undocumented migration and employment, require fair working conditions and encourage return home.

The seasonal and low-skilled components are the unknown factors for the Australia-Pacific migration partnership. Seasonal employment may be less socially disruptive than permanent migration and encourage more remittances and skills transfer. World Bank research has found that, from both the host and the source view, temporary migration may be preferable to permanent migration. The research shows that there is a higher socio-cultural-political cost involved in permanent migration, due to the problems of assimilation in Australia and cultural erosion in the Pacific, than in seasonal flows which prevent a brain-drain and repatriate skills.<sup>80</sup> In Fiji, the transition from partly forced, permanent migration that contributed little to national development, to temporary migration to reach personal economic aspirations has resulted in greater poverty alleviation from remittances.<sup>81</sup> The migrant, however, may not want to return home to unemployment or lower wages,<sup>82</sup> and some argue that it would be unjust for Australia to forcibly remove people.<sup>83</sup> A low-skilled program is also advantageous to the Pacific. The Islands have a comparative advantage in their low-skilled labour force that can be exploited through access to international migration.<sup>84</sup> Granting access to this group

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79 Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee. 2005. "Information about the inquiry." Inquiry into Pacific Region seasonal contract labour.

80 Mohammad Amin and Aaditya Mattoo. 2005. "Does Temporary Migration Have to Be Permanent?" Policy Research Working Paper 3582. Washington DC: The World Bank.

81 Ron Duncan. 15 April 2006. Email communication with author. Canberra; and Manoranjan Mohanty. 2005. "Globalisation, New Labour Migration and Development in Fiji Islands." Paper presented at State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project Conference on Globalisation, Governance and the Pacific Islands. Canberra: Australian National University. p9.

82 Mohammad Amin and Aaditya Mattoo. 2005. "Does Temporary Migration Have to Be Permanent?"

83 Glenn Withers. 6 April 2006. Interview by author. Canberra.

84 Terrie L. Walmsley et al. 2005. "The Impact of Liberalizing Labour Mobility in the Pacific Region: An Asian Development Bank – Commonwealth Secretariat Joint Report to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat." p8.

May 2006

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through a positive discriminatory migration program<sup>85</sup> will produce the largest development benefits as this group currently suffers the greatest restriction.<sup>86</sup>

The success of the scheme for the Pacific will depend on many factors, but hinges on the design and management of the program. The Australian Council of Regional Economic Justice (ACREJ) submission to the inquiry suggests the impact on the Pacific will be influenced by the number of workers recruited from a source country, the length of the scheme and the use of remittances.<sup>87</sup> There are many opportunities for the program to fail—through changes in the labour market or economy in either nation, incidents of exploitation or a high rate of overstaying.<sup>88</sup> The inequalities in negotiating power between individual source countries that can be easily substituted with another and Australia as a regional power must be acknowledged and addressed.<sup>89</sup> The Senate inquiry is a necessary step in gathering information and learning about the benefits and disadvantages of a Pacific seasonal contract labour program.

### 3.1.1 Canadian Model

The Canadian seasonal contract labour program has been put forward by many experts and by the inquiry as a best practice model. The Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (CSAWP) provides some useful insights for both Australia and the Pacific because of the similarities in the host and source countries in regards to size, economy and immigration history, the lengthy operation of the program, similar objectives to the proposed Australian scheme, and its extensive study and analysis.<sup>90</sup> Since 1966 in the Caribbean and 1974 in Mexico, CSAWP has brought in seasonal workers to Canada for an average of 4 months and maximum 8 months employment in agriculture. In 2004 19,000 workers participated in the program, managed initially by the government and since 1987 by the non-profit, private agency, the Foreign Agricultural Resources Management Service (F.A.R.M.S.).<sup>91</sup> The workers are mainly young married men between 25–40 years of age with only primary level schooling, whose main reason for

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85 Labelled as such by Senator Peter Cook, the Chairman of the 2003 Australian Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands in an interview on ABC Radio Australia. 2004. "Australia: New Zealand keen to open job market to Pacific Islanders (Interview between Graeme Dobell and Senator Peter Cook)." Pacific Beat. p1.

86 Satish Chand. 2005. "Labour mobility for sustainable livelihood in Pacific Island States." p3.

87 Australian Centre for Regional Economic Justice (ACREJ). 2006. "Submission No. 31." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. p3.

88 George Brownbill. 24 March 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra.

89 Mohammad Amin and Aaditya Mattoo. 2005. "Does Temporary Migration Have to Be Permanent?"

90 Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology. p4.

91 Peter Mares, through his research project Pacific Labour and Australian Horticulture at the Institute of Social Research at Swinburne University, has undertaken a critical analysis of CSAWP in Ontario and provides a more detailed overview of the program. Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19."

May 2006

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participating in the program is to earn an income to improve their household's standard of living.<sup>92</sup>

CSAWP is considered the best practice seasonal migration program because it meets the needs of workers, employers and other stakeholders by finding a balance between the labour supply concerns of agriculture and the economic aspirations and desirable working conditions for workers. Specific best practices include the benefits of work authorisation and the protection of working conditions by law compared to illegal migration, the community attention given to foreign worker programs which gives support and opportunities for socialisation, public recruiting which is fairer and less costly to both parties than private systems, work guarantees and using a simple, official method of calculating wages.<sup>93</sup> The scheme has had positive long-term development outcomes for the source countries by providing a stable form of high income for migrants to repatriate as savings and remittances.

There has however been some criticism of CSAWP among migrant workers. The direct relationship between the farmer and worker allows for the potential exploitation of the worker. There have been protests and strikes by workers over cases of overworking and underpaying, abuse and unacceptable accommodation.<sup>94</sup> The Canadian model is constructed heavily in favour of the employer as the mechanism provided for workers complaints, consular liaison officers from their diplomatic mission, have to maintain the smooth running of the scheme and good relations with Canada.<sup>95</sup> As such there is no real representation of workers interests, apart from activist groups like Justicia for Migrant Workers.<sup>96</sup> These problems, and their possible solutions, can be used to design a program for Australia and the Pacific that is mutually satisfying for all parties.

### 3.2. INTEREST GROUPS

The agendas of the key interest groups involved in the proposal for Pacific labour mobility have implications for the social outcomes of the scheme. The varied stakeholders view the proposal through different perspectives and the tensions play out politically through the medium of the Senate inquiry. The Government sees a low-skilled seasonal labour program as a migration issue, while skilled migration is considered a trade issue. The Opposition has addressed the debate through an aid and development mandate for the

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92 Andrew Downes and Cyrlene Odle-Worrell. 2002. "Canadian Migrant Agricultural Workers' Program Research Project – The Caribbean Component (Executive Summary)." Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program as a Model of Best Practices in Migrant Worker Participation in the Benefits of Economic Globalization Project. Ottawa: The North-South Institute. p6.

93 David Griffith. 2002. "The Canadian and United States Migrant Agricultural Workers Programs: Parallels and Divergence between Two North American Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Labour Markets with respect to 'Best Practices' (Executive Summary)." Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program as a Model of Best Practices in Migrant Worker Participation in the Benefits of Economic Globalization Project. Ottawa: The North-South Institute. p4-7.

94 For example, the strike in October 2005 by Mexican farm workers in Pitt Meadows, British Columbia, Canada who were paid C\$24 per 10 hour day and required to live in unheated construction trailers with only one laundry machine for 44 workers and outside cooking. See Jonathan Woodward. 3 October 2005. "They came to Canada to work. But \$24 for a 10-hour day wasn't what they had in mind." Toronto Globe and Mail. Toronto, Canada.

95 Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19." p11.

96 Justicia/Justice for Migrant Workers (J4MW). 2006. "The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program." Justicia/Justice for Migrant Workers (J4MW).

May 2006

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Pacific. Increased access to Australian labour markets is a high priority policy for Pacific Island governments. Development agencies including AusAID, Oxfam and Pacific NGOs have approved an unskilled development program for its benefits to development and reducing poverty. Unions in Australia are divided on the issue of foreign labour, with the Australian Workers Union (AWU) concerned about the deterioration of working conditions for locals and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) sceptical about non-permanent migration. Finally, rural industries, in particular horticulture, are the most vocal groups pushing for a seasonal labour scheme. While all stakeholders are concerned with the costs involved with a labour program, this submission limits its discussion to the social implications of this debate.

### 3.2.1. The Government

The current Liberal Government has so far rejected the proposal for seasonal contract labour as not beneficial for either Australia or the Pacific. The Government's objections, raised by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer<sup>97</sup> and by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA),<sup>98</sup> lie in a number of concerns about what they term 'guestworkers'. A temporary unskilled labour scheme is against Australia's established skilled, permanent and non-discriminatory immigration policy, although temporary entry is increasingly becoming part of Australia's migration program through overseas students and skilled workers, and the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa acts as a default unskilled labour program.<sup>99</sup> The Treasurer Peter Costello has claimed that seasonal labour is not part of Australia's ethos and culture.<sup>100</sup> This on-principle rejection is backed up by a rejection of the minor impact of a small scheme on Pacific economic development, which the Government believes is more effectively addressed through domestically generated growth supported by the Australian aid program.<sup>101</sup> Other issues and objections include concerns about wage erosion, national security, the social exclusion of migrants, enforcement and overstaying, the establishment of a precedent of sponsoring certain countries, and the expense of the scheme.<sup>102</sup>

### 3.2.2. The Opposition

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) has responded to urging by the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and by PICs for labour mobility by setting up this inquiry, and has anticipated that it will become a major political issue.<sup>103</sup> The Shadow Minister for

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97 Alexander Downer. January 2006. "Guest Commentary on Labour Mobility." Pacific Magazine.

98 Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). 2006. "Submission No. 43." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour.

99 Nic Maclellan. 2006. "Submission No. 32." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. p6.

100 Dateline. 15 June 2005. "The Real Pacific Solution."

101 Alexander Downer. January 2006. "Guest Commentary on Labour Mobility." p1.

102 Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). 2006. "Submission No. 30." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour p18-19; Senator Judith Troeth. 29 March 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra; Terrie L. Walmsley et al. 2005. "The Impact of Liberalizing Labour Mobility in the Pacific Region: An Asian Development Bank – Commonwealth Secretariat Joint Report to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat." p9.

103 Gavin Marshall. 4 April 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra; and Bob Sercombe. 30 March 2006. Interview by author. Canberra.

May 2006

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International Development and Pacific Affairs, Bob Sercombe has developed a policy for the Pacific based on a labour mobility program to generate income and skills enhancement.<sup>104</sup> Sercombe believes that it is both in Australia's enlightened self-interest, in regards to economic stability and security, and simply the right thing to do for our neighbours to open our labour markets to unskilled temporary migrants.<sup>105</sup> The program should have the generation of specific development benefits central to its design as part of a whole package of a Pacific Community, whilst being careful not to disadvantage Australian workers. Sercombe has attacked the government over the perceived double standard and racial discrimination of the WHM visas accepting unskilled backpackers from Europe and North America but denying access to the Pacific.<sup>106</sup> The government rejects this criticism on the basis that the WHM scheme is reciprocal and the travellers have financial independence.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.2.3. Pacific Island Countries

Pacific Island governments and forums have been asking for greater access to the Australian labour market for many years. At the national level a form of remittance dependency has developed that is contingent on continuing migration.<sup>108</sup> This culture of migration,<sup>109</sup> where emigration is normal, expected, anticipated and an important element in household and national social and economic systems, is why labour mobility is a central element in negotiations in regional trade pacts and the Pacific Plan from the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat (PIF).<sup>110</sup> The ADB has found that temporary migrants could deliver huge economic benefits of US\$1 billion for the developing nations of the PIF, while barely impacting on the workforce of Australia and New Zealand.<sup>111</sup> The growing belief within PIC is that because development prospects for the small island states are few, future development will depend on greater opportunities for migration for training and employment.<sup>112</sup> Migrants themselves have voted with their feet following a

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104 Bob Sercombe. 2005a. "Our Generation's Challenge: Ending Extreme Poverty in our Region and the World." Labor's Policy Discussion Paper on Australia's Development Assistance. Canberra; Bob Sercombe. 2005b. "Towards a Pacific Community." Labor's Pacific Policy Discussion Paper. Canberra; and Bob Sercombe. 30 March 2006. Interview by author. Canberra.

105 Sercombe bases his argument on Graeme Dobell's suggestion that Australia has a historical obligation to the Pacific that has been forgotten, and that labour mobility should be conceived as an aid-security-economic policy for the region not migration. See Graeme Dobell. 2003. "The South Pacific: Policy Taboos, Popular Amnesia and Political Failure." The Menzies Research Centre Lecture Series: Australian Security in the 21st Century. In Papers on Pacific labour mobility to Australia. Australian Labor Party. p4.

106 Dateline. 15 June 2005. "The Real Pacific Solution"; and Bob Sercombe. 30 March 2006. Interview by author. Canberra.

107 Alexander Downer. January 2006. "Guest Commentary on Labour Mobility."

108 D Ahlburg. 1991. Remittances and Their Impact: A Study of Tonga and Western Samoa. p1.

109 John Connell. 2006. "Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific. Old Wine in Bigger Bottles?" p13.

110 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIF). 2005. The Pacific Plan: For Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration.

111 Terrie L. Walmsley et al. 2005. "The Impact of Liberalizing Labour Mobility in the Pacific Region: An Asian Development Bank – Commonwealth Secretariat Joint Report to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat." p1.

112 John Connell. 2006. "Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific. Old Wine in Bigger Bottles?" p37.



May 2006

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'leaving in order to stay' strategy. Labour mobility delivers benefits that reach ordinary people and thus is an important issue for PIC governments to respond to.<sup>113</sup>

### 3.2.4. Development Agencies

Aid agencies are placing increased emphasis on the role of international migration and remittances on development. There is almost a euphoria surrounding the improvement in standards of living that remittance flows have made in developing countries, proving to be a more reliable source of income than FDI and development aid.<sup>114</sup> The 'migration as aid' approach sees the tangible benefits of migration: greater incomes and investment in human capital, including education and health, reduction in poverty and unemployment, and multiplier effects on the local economy.<sup>115</sup> Migration as aid receives support from the NGO Oxfam which has approved a seasonal work program to complement Australia's official development assistance program.<sup>116</sup>

AusAID views the relationship between Australia and the Pacific region as a partnership in development, based on geographic positioning, their historical relationship and Australia's special responsibilities.<sup>117</sup> Recently AusAID has recommended that the government consider a Pacific unskilled migration program to combat rapid population growth and the 'youth bulge'.<sup>118</sup> The 2005 report finds that Melanesia's problems of unemployment and the accompanying social instability could be alleviated by the use of emigration as a safety valve, as has happened in Polynesia. To a certain extent the aid work of AusAID and other agencies is counterproductive, when what is needed in the Pacific is economic growth through the exploitation of its greatest asset—labour.<sup>119</sup> Pacific non-government organisations like the Tonga National Council of Churches see labour mobility as part of a wider campaign for economic justice in the face of problems such as global warming.<sup>120</sup> Yet migration is not a cure-all and development agencies have a tendency to overstate the significance of migration when it is only one development strategy.

### 3.2.5. Unions

Unions in Australia have presented a range of positions on Pacific labour mobility. There has been vocal opposition from the Australian Workers Union (AWU) to the idea of

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113 Robbie Robertson. 2006. "Submission No. 3." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development and Governance. p10.

114 Hein De Haas. 2005. "International Migration, Remittances and Development: myths and facts." p1277.

115 Robbie Robertson. 2006. "Submission No. 3." p6-8.

116 Oxfam. 2006. "Submission No. 33." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour.

117 AusAID. 2004. Pacific Regional Aid Strategy: 2004-2009. p11.

118 AusAID (prepared by Ron Duncan and James Gilling). 2005a. Core Group Recommendations Report: For a White Paper on Australia's aid program p69; and AusAID. 2005b. Core Group Recommendations Report: For a White Paper on Australia's aid program. Companion Volume. Commonwealth of Australia. Chapter 6, p12.

119 George Brownbill. 24 March 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra.

120 Nic Maclellan and Peter Mares. 2006. "Remittances and Labour Mobility in the Pacific: A working paper on seasonal work programs in Australia for Pacific Islanders." Melbourne: Pacific Labour and Australian Horticulture Project, Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology. p25.

May 2006

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importing cheap labour ripe for exploitation and with the potential to undermine local wages and conditions.<sup>121</sup> The AWU believes that the development of the Pacific Islands is a separate policy issue to Australian labour and that Australia should not contribute to dependency on migration that will deny PIC sustainable future economic growth. In addition, the AWU has argued that Australia should not condemn itself to large low wage sectors for a quick fix to the labour shortage problem. In fact economic analysis shows that, when in a regulated program, foreign workers will cost more than local workers, meaning that there would be little chance of Australians losing jobs or pay rates being undermined.<sup>122</sup> The Australian Council of Trade Unions has shown interest in the idea of a PIC labour program but insists that workers should have the right to permanent residency not seasonal migration.<sup>123</sup>

### 3.2.6. Rural Industries

Many rural industries, especially the horticultural sector, have called for a seasonal work program as one of a range of solutions to labour shortages. The NFF,<sup>124</sup> Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL)<sup>125</sup> and a range of regional lobby boards and growers<sup>126</sup> have submitted their labour problems to the inquiry. Horticulture is a major contributor to the Australian economy with many opportunities to expand into new crops, but it is a manual labour intensive, seasonal industry with a deficiency in labour supply that results in substantial losses to the national gross value of production of agricultural production.<sup>127</sup> A survey by Peter Mares in the Murray Valley, Victoria, found that half of all growers reported difficulties in finding enough labour, and 70 percent of growers supported a seasonal program.<sup>128</sup> Farming labour is increasingly unattractive to Australians because of the nature of the work: low wages, insecurity of employment, poor image, lack of career paths, tough working conditions, physically demanding, long hours and isolation. In addition, unemployment is low, there are other employment opportunities in urban areas, leisure time is now highly valued and the high effective marginal tax rate for agricultural workers acts as a disincentive.<sup>129</sup> Most labour intensive farming industries want the use

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121 Australian Workers' Union (AWU). 2006. "Submission No. 34." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour.

122 Horticulture Australia. 2006. "Submission No. 11." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. p33.

123 Nic Maclellan and Peter Mares. 2006. "Remittances and Labour Mobility in the Pacific: A working paper on seasonal work programs in Australia for Pacific Islanders." p28.

124 National Farmers Federation (NFF). 2006. "Submission No. 35." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour; and National Farmers Federation (NFF). 2005. Labour Supply Action Plan. Australia.

125 Horticulture Australia. 2006. "Submission No. 11."

126 Growcom. 2006. "Submission No. 9." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers Ltd trading as Growcom Australia; Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board and Mildura Rural City Council. "Submission No. 25." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. Mildura, Victoria.

127 There is no specific detailed data available with precise estimates of labour shortages and costs in Australia. See Growcom. 2006. "Submission No. 9." p3.

128 Peter Mares. 2006b. "Labour Shortages in Murray Valley Horticulture: A survey of growers' needs and attitudes." Institute for Social Research. Swinburne University of Technology. p3-4.

129 Horticulture Australia. 2006. "Submission No. 11." p27.

May 2006

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of a highly regulated seasonal labour force to meet growing labour shortages, while acknowledging that more research and a pilot project is required for it to be successful. The broader ramifications of the enormous costs involved, tax, superannuation and wage issues and the cultural, language and religious differences of the workers make this option a last resort for industries stymied because of labour shortages.<sup>130</sup>

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130 Interview with Kris Newton, CEO of Horticulture Australia Ltd. 5 May 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra.

May 2006

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## 4. POTENTIAL SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The potential social implications of Pacific Region seasonal contract labour can be predicted from PIC past experiences of international migration and from other seasonal labour schemes such as the Canadian model. The social impact of a regulated, unskilled and temporary migration program to Australia may prove different to past migratory movements, yet it is important to anticipate the probable effects. Producing positive social developmental outcomes in the Pacific through migration and remittances is a key incentive for a labour program, and will also decide its level of success. The recommendations made here aim to maximise the benefits for workers, their families and the PIC, while minimising the negative impacts.

While a seasonal contract labour program with Australia would have substantial economic and social development benefits for the Pacific, it may produce some negative side-effects. The main advantage of a seasonal labour program for the Pacific is the opportunity to earn extra remittances legally through low-skilled employment without requiring permanent migration. The PIF believes that the scheme would have a positive effect on poverty, investment, savings and population pressures while financing education and stimulating skills development.<sup>131</sup> However, there are potential negative implications, including increasing the Pacific's dependency on remittances, escalating the loss of skilled workers, and the impacts of separation on families, relationships and children. Through regulation and a social development emphasis to the program, these impacts can be reduced. This final chapter anticipates the social implications of increased migration and remittances through seasonal, low-skilled and regulated migration and recommends a pilot program with mechanisms to accentuate the beneficial impacts and minimise the disadvantages.

*Recommendation: A pilot program to trial seasonal, low-skilled and regulated migration should be developed with specific attention to the social implications for the Pacific.*

### 4.1. INCREASED MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES

As remittances are already an essential part of many Pacific economies and are desired by others, a seasonal labour program will give migration and remittances even more importance. In the Canadian scheme, the majority of migrants remitted funds that were instrumental to household income and were used to pay-off debts, build houses and educate children.<sup>132</sup> The remittances spread throughout the community—in one example in Jamaica there were an estimated 19,563 people dependent on remittances from 5,081 migrant workers, an average of 3.9 dependents per worker.<sup>133</sup> The greatest impact of the

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131 Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIF). 2006. "Submission No. 26." Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee: Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour. Suva, Fiji. p1.

132 Andrew Downes and Cyrilene Odle-Worrell. 2002. "Canadian Migrant Agricultural Workers' Program Research Project – The Caribbean Component (Executive Summary)." p8.

133 Roy Russell. 2002. "Jamaican Worker's Participation in CSWAP and Development Consequences in the Workers' Rural Home Communities (Executive Summary)." Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program as a Model of Best Practices in Migrant Worker Participation in the Benefits of Economic Globalization Project. Kingston, Jamaica: The North-South Institute. p3.

May 2006

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program was felt at the individual and family level, with almost all workers acknowledging the improvement in their family's welfare. Remittances provided better food and clothing, access to health services and higher levels of schooling for children.<sup>134</sup> During the first season of migration, income was spent on consumption and repaying debts, but the longer a worker stayed with the program the more likely it was that a proportion of surplus remittances was spent on investment and housing improvement.<sup>135</sup> The poverty alleviation outcomes of CSAWP demonstrate the long-term development potential of a seasonal migration program.

The enthusiasm for the development promise of migration must be checked by the potential costs. PIC governments cannot control the use of remittances as they flow direct to individuals, and it is unlikely that remittances alone will produce large-scale investment and business development.<sup>136</sup> If remittances become an excuse for Pacific nations not to undertake development, and governments and citizens reliant on the income continue to encourage international migration, the program could contribute to a halt in development in the Islands.<sup>137</sup> To prevent this, the program needs to be linked to Australia's aid program to ensure that opportunities for productive investment are maximised and the culture of perpetual migration minimised.<sup>138</sup>

*Recommendation: Program should be linked to Australia's aid program in the Pacific to ensure the beneficial development outcomes of migration and remittances are maximised.*

The impact of more young people migrating, albeit seasonally, will have many potential social implications for the Pacific. Church leaders have described cases of family disintegration and infidelity when one partner worked overseas, such as men from the Pacific marrying in Australia for residency while having a wife and family at home.<sup>139</sup> Psychological stress on children and falling educational performance have been witnessed in the families of Fijian men deployed as peacekeepers, soldiers and security guards in Iraq.<sup>140</sup> Concerns have been raised about the ageing of the rural population as youth emigrate, and the subsequent burden to health services and effects on agricultural production.<sup>141</sup> The Pacific has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world, which has been partly attributed to the destruction of traditional family mechanisms for conflict

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134 Gustavo Verduzco and Maria Isabel Lozano. 2002. "Mexican Farm Workers' Participation in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Labour Market and Development Consequences in their Rural Home Communities. (Executive Summary)." Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Program as a Model of Best Practices in Migrant Worker Participation in the Benefits of Economic Globalization Project. Ottawa: The North-South Institute. p9.

135 Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19." p31; and Verduzco, Gustavo and Maria Isabel Lozano. 2002. "Mexican Farm Workers' Participation in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Labour Market and Development Consequences in their Rural Home Communities. (Executive Summary)." p9.

136 Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19." p31.

137 John Connell. 2006. "Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific. Old Wine in Bigger Bottles?"

138 Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19." p32.

139 Nic Maclellan and Peter Mares. 2006. "Remittances and Labour Mobility in the Pacific: A working paper on seasonal work programs in Australia for Pacific Islanders." p33.

140 Ibid, p33.

141 Ibid, p33.

May 2006

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resolution and support due to the migration of parents and relatives.<sup>142</sup> The effect of increased migration on traditional gender roles in rural villages is visible in the loss of male role models and changes to the gendered allocation of jobs.<sup>143</sup>

*Recommendation: Program should develop mechanisms for minimising negative social impacts, for example monitoring the psychological stress of children and providing counselling, mentoring programs and support groups.*

*Recommendation: A maximum length of absence should be imposed to ensure workers are not separated from their families for extended periods of time.*

The possible negative impacts of increased migration on relationships, children and communities are countered by the positive social outcomes. Remittances generated by CSAWP have had a significant impact on education. In Jamaica, 35 percent of remittances were spent on children's education, and the children of migrant labourers are more likely to stay in school longer.<sup>144</sup> The communal nature of society in the Pacific means that economic benefits of remittances are shared around the community, and that transnational family networks are strong and supportive enough to endure separation through 'adoption' of children by relatives, communication and shared goals.<sup>145</sup>

#### 4.2. SEASONAL MIGRATION

Temporary migration encourages workers to repatriate the money and skills acquired in Australia into investment at home. Studies have noted that temporary migration increases flows of remittances directed at investment and is more likely to reinforce the migrant's influence on remittance spending and investment decisions.<sup>146</sup> Seasonal programs ensure the continuation of migration and much needed remittances without settlement. The Canadian experience found that the rate of overstaying was reduced because of the expectation of return the following year.<sup>147</sup> Non-permanent migration prevents the loss of population and human capital; returnees bring social and cultural capital and skills back with them.<sup>148</sup> Most importantly, a seasonal program limits the separation of migrants from families and thus may alleviate the social costs, although CSAWP did result in some

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142 Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC). 1998. Fourth Regional Conference for Pacific Youth Report. Noumea, New Caledonia: Secretariat of the Pacific Community. p18.

143 K James. 1994. "Effeminate males and changes in the construction of gender in Tonga." Pacific Studies. 17; Nic Maclellan and Peter Mares. 2006. "Remittances and Labour Mobility in the Pacific: A working paper on seasonal work programs in Australia for Pacific Islanders." p33.

144 Roy Russell. 2002. "Jamaican Worker's Participation in CSWAP and Development Consequences in the Workers' Rural Home Communities (Executive Summary)." p6; and Gustavo Verduzco and Maria Isabel Lozano. 2002. "Mexican Farm Workers' Participation in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Labour Market and Development Consequences in their Rural Home Communities. (Executive Summary)." p9.

145 John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean." p53; and Bob Sercombe. 30 March 2006. Interview by author. Canberra.

146 John Connell and Dennis Conway. 2000. "Migration and Remittances in Island Microstates: A Comparative Perspective on the South Pacific and the Caribbean."

147 Philip L. Martin. 2003. "Managing Labor Migration: Temporary Worker Programs for the 21st Century." International Institute for Labour Studies. Geneva, Switzerland. p28.

148 Howard J Wiarda. 1994. "The Economic Effects of Emigration: The Dominican Republic." p177.

May 2006

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emotional problems.<sup>149</sup> In the future seasonal migration may prove more sustainable and conducive for development and supportive social arrangements in the Pacific than permanent emigration.

*Recommendation: Program should be based on seasonal contracts with the expectation of return the following year to reduce overstaying and ensure sustainable incomes, while limiting the separation of migrants from their families.*

#### 4.3. LOW-SKILLED MIGRATION

A low-skilled labour program provides employment opportunities to the most disadvantaged Pacific Islanders excluded from other migration programs. Unemployed or underemployed Islanders and their families would be the main beneficiaries of the scheme, earning high incomes and skills to contribute to development in the Pacific. The program could give Melanesian countries the emigration safety valve available to Polynesia to counter the problem of high youth unemployment and ensuing social instability.<sup>150</sup> The transfer of knowledge, skills and experience as well as money is a major benefit of a labour program.<sup>151</sup> In CSAWP, migrants gained skills in farming, driving and operating mechanical and technical farm equipment including forklifts, harvesters, crop management, business accounting and management, computers and construction.<sup>152</sup> There was some evidence that returning workers used these skills or trained others.<sup>153</sup> HAL wants to develop a kind of 'skills passport' for agriculture, an informal qualification that lists the competencies acquired in Australia that may be beneficial on return home.<sup>154</sup> Academics also anticipate that for unemployed Islanders, exposure to the discipline of formal sector work is good training.<sup>155</sup> Yet the benefits may be overstated, for in agriculture most skills are simple and can be picked up very quickly.<sup>156</sup>

*Recommendation: Program should make useful skill transfers from Australia to the Pacific a priority.*

#### 4.4. REGULATED MIGRATION

An official migration program will mean that migration is more accessible and regulated, ensuring better development outcomes for the Pacific. The CSAWP scheme increased access to the very poor who lack the resources to pay for illegal migration, which can often be more expensive than legal routes, and allowed migrants to avoid long periods of

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149 Roy Russell. 2002. "Jamaican Worker's Participation in CSWAP and Development Consequences in the Workers' Rural Home Communities (Executive Summary)." p7.

150 Bob Sercombe. 30 March 2006. Interview by author. Canberra.

151 Ibid.

152 Andrew Downes and Cyrilene Odle-Worrell. 2002. "Canadian Migrant Agricultural Workers' Program Research Project – The Caribbean Component (Executive Summary)." p8.

153 Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19." p32.

154 Kris Newton. 5 May 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra.

155 Satish Chand. 2005. "Labour mobility for sustainable livelihood in Pacific Island States." p12; and Charles Yala. 5 November 2005. "Work in Australia – who will benefit?" Papua New Guinea Post Courier.

156 Gavin Marshall. 4 April 2006. Interview by Author. Canberra

May 2006

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separation from family.<sup>157</sup> A regulated program reduces the dangers of exploitation associated with undocumented workers but does not ensure protection. Without effective regulation and administration seasonal labour programs will lead to abuse of migrant workers.<sup>158</sup> A further challenge lies in trying to avoid exacerbating the brain-drain from the Pacific if skilled workers are attracted to the high rewards of agricultural work in Australia. The solution may be to impose an unemployed or low-skilled selection criteria on potential workers, or follow the CSAWP model and take workers from poor and underdeveloped regions. Private or government recruitment in the Pacific could be subject to corruption as experienced in Fiji hiring procedures for work in Iraq and Kuwait.<sup>159</sup> These implementation issues need to be addressed before a pilot program is instigated, through debate between all stakeholders. The success of Canada's seasonal labour program lies in its bilateral partnership where all parties have a vested interest.<sup>160</sup>

*Recommendation: Program should have built-in protections against exploitation and abuse.*

*Recommendation: Program should target the most disadvantaged Pacific Islanders to benefit the poorest and avoid intensifying the brain-drain.*

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157 Peter Mares. 2006. "Submission No. 19." p9.

158 Nic Maclellan and Peter Mares. 2006. "Remittances and Labour Mobility in the Pacific: A working paper on seasonal work programs in Australia for Pacific Islanders." p38.

159 Fiji-registered recruiting agency Meridian Services is being investigated for charging \$150 application fee to 20,000 men waiting for security jobs in the Gulf, and leaving 200 migrants stranded and jobless in Kuwait. See Dateline. 15 June 2005. "The Real Pacific Solution.;" Islands Business. 2005. "The Kuwait Imbroglia." Islands Business.

160 Elizabeth Ruddick. 2004. "Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program." Session III: Bilateral Approaches to Managing the Movement and Temporary Stay of Workers, IOM-WTO-World Bank Seminar on Managing Trade and Migration. p6.



May 2006

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## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In this submission, the potential social effects in the Pacific of a regulated, low-skilled, seasonal migration program with Australia have been predicted through a study of current migration practices. Pacific region seasonal contract labour is a contentious issue addressed by the Senate inquiry that has attracted a range of submissions from varied interest groups. This submission limits its scope to the term of reference (e); 'the effects of the scheme on the economies of Pacific nations', from a Pacific Islander socio-economic perspective.

The impact of increased migration and subsequent remittances on development, population, employment and social relations in the Pacific has both positive and potentially detrimental effects. Further research is required on the impacts on Pacific communities and should be reflected in a careful design of the program to maximise benefits and minimise problems. This submission endorses the proposal for a Pacific Region seasonal contract labour program as a development opportunity for the Pacific. A pilot program should be developed with specific attention to the social implications for Pacific Islanders.

*Recommendation: Further research needs to be undertaken to understand the social implications of seasonal migration, following the establishment of the pilot program. The research should include extensive monitoring of the social impacts and continued reassessment of the costs and benefits.*

May 2006

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May 2006

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