

Fijians push for access to Seasonal Worker Program

by Jesse Doyle
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A group of Fiji-born Australian citizens and residents has been pushing for the country's inclusion in the Seasonal Worker Program (SWP). Fiji has been excluded from the scheme since its inception, largely as a result of the 2006 military coup. The political upheaval saw Australia implement a **series of sanctions targeting the military regime**. Fiji is also banned from the much larger New Zealand Pacific islander farm-work program.

According to one of the key campaigners, Audrey Finau Dropsy, excluding Fijian workers from participating in the SWP for a situation that was out of their control is unfair. The campaigners have sent a formal request for meetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop and the Minister for Employment Eric Abetz.

The campaign has been gradually building momentum since last year, led by community groups the Voice of the Pacific and the United Pacific Council of Victoria.

Remittances currently account for **4.5% of Fiji's GDP** and have become the **largest source of foreign exchange earnings after tourism**.

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Link: <https://devpolicy.org/fijians-push-for-access-to-seasonal-worker-program-20131014-1/>