



## Note: Whatever happened to the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme evaluation?

By Stephen Howes  
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We've published a couple of interviews over the last two weeks ([here](#) and [here](#)) which provided industry perspectives on why the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (PSWPS) hasn't had more of a take up. The causes identified — there is no absolute shortage of potential fruit pickers due to the growing number of backpackers working in horticulture; there is a lot of illegal labour in the sector; and the scheme has too much red tape — are the same ones Danielle Hay and I found in our PSWPS survey [published](#) earlier this year.

Pacific seasonal workers aren't cheap. To get growers to turn to them, they need to be convinced of the productivity gains. But though there is talk of productivity gains associated with seasonal workers, there is no documented evidence. That's why it is disappointing that the Government has not released its PSWPS evaluation, even though it was due in August 2011 (according to the [executive summary](#) of the interim evaluation, which is the only related document released so far), has apparently been ready for months, and the decision to move from a pilot to a permanent program (the Seasonal Worker Program) was announced in December of last year.

Why the Government has been so slow to release this evaluation is hard to say. It's particularly disappointing given that the Shadow Foreign Minister Julie Bishop has declared her support for the scheme ([here](#)), thereby, one might think, taking it out of the political fray.

Let the evidence speak. Please publish the long-overdue PSWPS evaluation.

This blog is a part of a series on the Pacific Seasonal Worker Program. Other blogs in the series can be found [here](#).

*Stephen Howes is Director of the [Development Policy Centre](#). **Notes** are short posts, scheduled on demand.*

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