

Parliamentary inquiry to focus on Seasonal Worker Program

by Ashlee Betteridge
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A **parliamentary inquiry** is being held into the Pacific Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration.

The inquiry, which was requested by Immigration Minister Peter Dutton last month, has terms of reference examining:

- The role of seasonal workers in the horticulture industry;
- Expanding the SWP to other countries and sectors;
- The current and projected future workforce requirements for sectors that may benefit from seasonal workers;
- The impact on the Australian labour force of the current and projected SWP;
- The merits and challenges of increased recruitment of overseas workers, in particular providing increased access for women and youth workers;
- The role of the SWP in supporting development assistance in the Pacific;
- Any legislative and other impediments in attracting seasonal workers;
- The visa regime for seasonal workers, including compliance and related issues.

As Stephen Howes **has noted**, the Coalition came into government with only two promises on the Pacific in its foreign policy—one being to consider the expansion of the Seasonal Worker Program. The Foreign Minister has spoken supportively of the program numerous times. While there was **a positive move** earlier this year to open disused places in trial sectors up to horticulturalists to increase the number of participants, there has been little other progress on expansion. The inquiry could be a chance for momentum.

Submissions to the inquiry are due by 10 July.

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