

Newsletter: WB VP on SWP | Mari Pangestu lecture | 2015 AAC wrap

Author : Development Policy Centre

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Seasonal Worker Program: demand-side constraints and suggested reforms

This Wednesday, World Bank Vice-President for East Asia and the Pacific Axel van Trotsenburg will launch a new World Bank–Devpolicy survey of horticultural employers and industry associations on the Seasonal Worker Program (SWP). The SWP was intended to help meet the labour needs of Australia’s horticultural sector and to provide labour mobility opportunities to Pacific islanders. Why aren’t more employers demanding SWP workers? And what reforms would increase employer demand? Come along to Crawford School at 12pm on [Wednesday 18 February](#) to hear from researchers, employers and government.

Mari Pangestu on the new economy and development

The 2015 Harold Mitchell Development Policy Lecture will be delivered on Thursday 12 March by Professor Mari Pangestu, one of Indonesia’s leading policy voices and intellectuals, and former Minister for Trade and Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy. Professor Pangestu will speak on the topic of “The new economy and development: an Indonesian perspective”. Her talk will examine Indonesia’s development trajectory in the context of globalisation challenges, increasing interdependence and changing models of international business engagement. She will also provide insight into how her country has harnessed the opportunities and challenges of the “new economy”, encompassing the information, knowledge and creative sectors. More event details and registration can be found [here](#). Be sure to get in early so you don’t miss out!

2015 AAC wrap: Tanya Plibersek, the future of aid, and China’s new bank

The future of aid, Australian and otherwise, was among the hot topics discussed at our 2015 Australasian Aid Conference (AAC) last week, which brought together some 300 attendees.

Opposition Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek opened the conference. She made a passionate case for the importance of aid, criticised the drain of expertise caused by the DFAT–AusAID integration and called on the development community to do a better job in building the Australian community’s understanding of giving. Read the full address [here](#).

In his keynote, Robin Davies looked at three ‘anxieties’ of the current aid landscape: Is aid running out of customers? Should aid give way to ‘global public finance’? And should aid be more return-seeking as recipients become less dependent? Robin also offered some prescriptions for these anxieties, concluding

that aid “has a substantial and continuing role to play”. You can read Robin’s talk [here](#) [pdf].

These were just a couple of the many excellent presentations at the conference, and we’ll be bringing you podcasts, blogs, slides and more in the coming weeks. Most presentations are already available [here](#).

Our panel on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was also very popular, and found its way into stories in the [Australian Financial Review](#) (paywalled), [Devex](#) and on the [ABC](#). You can also see a wrap of some of the main issues covered by the conference in [this story](#) by Liam Fox, which aired on ABC News 24’s *The World* on Friday.

Some photos from the event are in the sidebar of the newsletter, and there’s more on our [Facebook page](#). Thanks to all who came along. We’ll also be circulating a survey to participants soon for their feedback.

PNG Update call for papers

Our annual [PNG Update](#) in conjunction with UPNG School of Business Administration will be held in Port Moresby on 18–19 June.

The PNG Update, which recommenced at UPNG last year after a gap of some years, is the premier forum for the discussion of research and analysis relating to contemporary economic and public policy issues in PNG.

The conference is multi-disciplinary in nature, and we are currently calling for papers under the general theme of “Development challenges in the LNG era.” More details on how to submit an abstract are [available here](#).

Upcoming events

Seasonal Worker Program: demand-side constraints and suggested reforms

Wednesday 18 February, 1–2pm, Acton Theatre. [Register here](#).

2015 Harold Mitchell Development Policy Lecture: Mari Pangestu

Thursday 12 March, 5.30–6.30pm. [Register here](#).

2015 PNG Update

18–19 June, University of Papua New Guinea. [Details here](#).

Blog highlights

Should aid to Indonesia [be slashed](#)?

Has the World Health Organization [reached its use-by date](#)?

[What is](#) the Julie Bishop aid narrative?

On the blog

[Enduring ties: half of PNG’s visitors are still Australian](#) by Carmen Voigt-Graf

[Seasonal Worker Program own goal](#) by Stephen Howes

[Australia’s billion-dollar aid cut: Indonesia gets it, or everybody does](#) by Robin Davies

[In her own words: Julie Bishop on aid \(part one\)](#) by Benjamin Day

[In her own words: Julie Bishop on aid \(part two\)](#) by Benjamin Day

[Will China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank succeed?](#) By Robert Bestani

[Visitor arrivals and the economic boom in Papua New Guinea](#) by Carmen Voigt-Graf

[Non-communicable diseases and aid: an update](#) by Sam Byfield

[Pacific Islands Trade, Invest and Work?](#) By Stephen Howes

[Do we need the WHO?](#) By Joel Negin

[Melanesians on the move](#) by Carmen Voigt-Graf

In brief

[A case for the Commonwealth \(at last!\)](#)

This is the fortnightly newsletter of the [Development Policy Centre](#) at Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University, published every second Friday.