

Seasonal Worker 'own goal' avoided

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The Australian Government announced last week that more places would be made available for employers using the Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) in the horticulture sector. While there has been no lifting of the overall cap, the Government has decided to allow horticulturalists access to any places not used by the four trial industries (aquaculture, cane, cotton and accommodation), where there has been limited demand from employers.

Previously, there had been 2,600 places allocated to the horticulture sector this year, almost all of which were taken, and 650 for the trial sectors, almost none of which were taken. As Stephen Howes [wrote in a blog last week](#), scrapping the reservation for the trial sectors is a simple and sensible way to better meet the demand from horticulturalists and to allow more Pacific workers the opportunity to participate. It also sits comfortably with the government's own official position on expansion of the program.

The strong emphasis on Australian jobs in the [press release](#) announcing the change is also notable. [As our recent report showed](#), seasonal workers are competing with foreign backpackers, not with the Australian unemployed.