

## Introduction

### Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.1 On 17 May 2015, the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon Peter Dutton MP, asked the Committee to inquire into and report on the Seasonal Worker Programme. The terms of reference of the inquiry were to have particular regard to:
- The role of seasonal workers in the horticulture industry;
  - Expanding the Seasonal Worker Programme 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 Seasonal Worker Programme;
  - The merits and challenges of increased recruitment of overseas workers, in particular providing increased access for women and youth workers;
  - The role of the Seasonal Worker Programme 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.

- 1.2 The Committee invited an array of stakeholders, groups and individuals to submit to the inquiry, including relevant Federal government departments, peak bodies, industry groups, approved employers under the Seasonal Worker Programme, and countries who participate in the Season Worker Programme.
- 1.3 The Committee received 44 submissions and seven exhibits from a range of overseas government departments, Federal, State and Territory government departments, peak bodies, academics and farmers, unions, a TAFE and church group.
- 1.4 The Committee also took evidence from 33 organisations and individuals at ten public hearings held in Canberra and Victoria over the course of the inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

## **Structure of the report**

- 1.5 The Committee's report is structured around the inquiry's terms of reference. This introductory chapter provides an outline of the conduct of the inquiry.
- 1.6 Chapter 2 provides some factual background information on the Seasonal Worker Programme including the role of approved providers, visa requirements, and participation rates.
- 1.7 The role of seasonal workers in the horticulture industry and an examination of the current workforce requirements for sectors that may benefit from seasonal workers is explored in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively
- 1.8 Chapter 5 considers whether the programme should be expanded into other sectors or regions and Chapter 6 looks at whether the Seasonal Worker Programme is impacting on the Australian labour force.
- 1.9 Chapter 7 focuses on the merits and challenges of providing increased access for women and youth workers.
- 1.10 The role of the Seasonal Worker Programme in supporting development outcomes in the Pacific is considered in Chapter 8.
- 1.11 Chapters 9 and 10, respectively, examine the legislative and other impediments in attracting seasonal workers and compliance within the programme.

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1 See appendices A, B and C.