



Submission No 9

Inquiry into Australia's Relationship with Timor-Leste

Name: Mr Mark Roddam

Organisation: Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations



Our Ref: DEEWR SUBMISSION

John Kovacic PSM
Deputy Secretary

Committee Secretary
Foreign Affairs Subcommittee
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia's relationship with Timor-Leste.

I am pleased to provide the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade with information about Timor-Leste's involvement in the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme, and the Seasonal Worker Program.

The Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme.

The three year Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme (the Pilot) concluded on 30 June 2012. The Pilot tested whether a seasonal labour mobility program could contribute to the economic development of participating Pacific Island countries through seasonal employment experience, remittances and training. The Pilot also examined the benefit to growers in the Australian horticulture industry able to demonstrate an inability to source sufficient local labour to meet seasonal demand.

In September 2011, the Pilot was expanded to include an additional four Pacific Island countries, and a small-scale trial with accommodation providers in Broome, Western Australia involving workers from Timor-Leste. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) was the lead agency responsible for implementation of the Pilot, and was supported by an Inter-departmental committee.

The Seasonal Worker Program

The Seasonal Worker Program commenced on 1 July 2012 and builds on the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme in contributing to the economic development of participating countries. The program is ongoing for the horticulture sector, and involves eight participating Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste. A small scale three year trial is also being undertaken in the accommodation, aquaculture, cane and cotton sectors in selected regions. All nine participating countries are eligible to participate in the trial arrangements.

Timor-Leste and DEEWR have worked together to develop labour sending arrangements for Timor-Leste to send workers to Australia under the Seasonal Worker Program. These arrangements have proven to be effective and robust, reflecting the strong and cooperative working relationship between the two governments, and their mutual commitment to achieve the best outcomes.

DEEWR has worked closely with Timor-Leste to develop relationships with Australian employers in the accommodation and horticulture sectors. Further, DEEWR has assisted to facilitate a marketing visit by the Timor-Leste labour attaché and Australian employers in both the horticulture and accommodation sectors, to promote Timor-Leste workers. Timor-Leste workers have now been recruited into both of these sectors, and their participation in the Seasonal Worker Program is increasing.

DEEWR has continued to facilitate interactions where appropriate between Timor-Leste officials and key program stakeholders. Timor-Leste is proving to be a competitive participating country, and has impressed Australian Approved Employers by supplying hardworking seasonal workers.

Timor-Leste considers the Seasonal Worker Program to be very important and it is a key focus for the Timor-Leste Government. The labour sending unit in Timor-Leste is efficient, responsive and has a strong working relationship with Australian Government officials.

Twenty-two seasonal workers have come to Australia collectively under the Pilot and Seasonal Worker Program. Of these, twenty have been employed in the accommodation sector, and two in the horticulture sector.

I trust this information is helpful to



Mark Roddam
A/g Group Manager
Social Policy and Economic Strategy Group
Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations

26 March 2013