

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2012–2013**

Outcome 3 - Employment

DEEWR Question No. EW0783_13

Senator Abetz provided in writing.

Question

Seasonal Worker Program

In relation to the Pacific Seasonal Workers Programme: (i) What is the current cost/seasonal worker? (ii) What is the current take-up rate? (iii) How is this program expected to grow into the future?

Answer

(i) It is not possible to provide an indication of the current cost per seasonal worker for several reasons. First, no money is provided directly to seasonal workers. Second, seasonal workers are recruited when employers cannot find enough local workers to meet seasonal demand for labour. Third, seasonal workers are paid at the same rate as Australian workers under the relevant industry award.

(ii) Up to 12 000 places are available over four years to employers who may recruit from nine partner countries (Timor-Leste, Nauru, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) when they are unable to source enough local labour to meet seasonal demand:

- 10 450 places for the horticulture sector over four years to 30 June 2016, and
- 1550 places for the trial sectors of accommodation, aquaculture, cotton and cane over three years to 30 June 2015.

The total number of Special Program (subclass 416) seasonal worker program visa grants under the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme and the Seasonal Worker Program as at 1 March 2013 is 754.

Take-up by industry is driven by Australian employers' unmet demand for seasonal labour. Take-up by Australian employers in selected industries may be impacted by a number of factors such as changes in the labour market (including the greater availability of local labour), economic conditions and climatic conditions.

(iii) The Department has projected a steady rate of growth, with 10 450 places for the horticulture sector over four years to 30 June 2016, and 1550 places for the trial over three years to 30 June 2015.

Indicative ceilings have been set – 2000 visas in 2012–13, 2500 in 2013–14, 3250 in 2014–15 and 4250 in 2015–16, reflecting the anticipated growth in demand.

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