

QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 21 OCTOBER 2008

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

(27) Output 1.1: Migration and Temporary Entry

Senator Hanson-Young (L&CA 56) asked:

In relation to the Pacific Islander worker pilot scheme, is there any way we could have something given to the committee that clearly identifies what the roles and responsibilities are of the departments?

Answer:

An Inter Departmental Committee, chaired by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), has been established to guide the development and implementation of the scheme. Members include the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C), the Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance), Treasury, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), and the Department of Energy, Resources & Tourism, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Workplace Ombudsman (WO). The IDC meets fortnightly.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR):

- Lead agency with responsibility for the planning and execution of the pilot scheme.
- Will undertake Labour Market assessments within the regions proposed to host the pilot.
- Will review and approve regional bodies to assist with the scheme. In approving the application DEEWR will undertake an assessment of regional employment and during the course of the Scheme will work with local employers to develop employment opportunities for Indigenous and other disadvantaged domestic jobseekers.
- Will approve Australian employers to participate in the pilot
- Is responsible for consultation with relevant stakeholders
- Is responsible for monitoring employment conditions of the workers in conjunction with the WO.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC):

- Is responsible for arranging the entry of eligible workers into Australia. This will include utilising standard assessments such as health and character screening before a decision is made on an application.

- Is responsible for the monitoring of the Special Program Agreements to ensure the terms of agreement are being met. Australian employers will enter into Agreements with (DIAC) to cover visa arrangements for workers
- Will develop and fund a number of community relations projects within the selected locations to promote community cohesion. Activities are likely to focus on developing cultural awareness and understanding between the Pacific island workers and members of local and indigenous communities and will incorporate consultations with employers, relevant state government agencies, local government, community organisations, industry groups and police and other services.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT):

- Is responsible for foreign and trade policy aspects of the scheme, in particular for facilitating the development of the Memoranda of Understanding and other intergovernmental arrangements between the participating countries and the Australian Government.
- Is responsible for communication between Australia and participating Governments and reporting on participant country views and experiences.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF):

- Given that the pilot scheme will be operating in the horticulture industry,
- DAFF is closely involved in the design and implementation of the pilot through the IDC. The department will not be responsible for administration of the pilot scheme.

The Workplace Ombudsman (WO):

Is responsible for ensuring that each of the participants maintains compliance with the Workplace Relations Act 1996. In general terms, this will include the following activities:

- Completing workplace relations integrity checks on employers;
- Providing information to each of the participants about their rights and obligations;
- Monitoring compliance through proactive operational activities; and
- Investigating allegations of non compliance.

Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID):

AusAID's role is to ensure that Pacific island communities fully benefit from the opportunities for economic development provided under the pilot. AusAID will take the lead:

- The development of a framework, shared with New Zealand, for pre-departure briefing, including the provision of information materials for use in briefing;
- The provision of financial literacy training, and particularly the use of formal systems to transfer remittances in a cost-effective way and in managing savings and planning for contingencies.
- The piloting of targeted "add-on" skills training in areas such as rural skills and skills promoting enterprise development, that will help equip returning workers for jobs and business development in their home communities;
- The provision of capacity building and technical assistance to partner governments to help them manage the movement of workers and to fulfil their obligations under the pilot;
- The coordination of development impact assessments, in partnership with academics and the World Bank, to determine the economic development benefits to home countries and communities.