

## QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING: 20 OCTOBER 2009

#### IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP PORTFOLIO

#### **(20) Program 1.1: Visa and Migration**

Senator Barnett (L&C 55) asked:

In terms of your pre-Pilot trial, can you advise the work undertaken, the dates of arrival, dates of departure and the cost of the trial? Can you advise the cost to the department of your involvement and describe the department's involvement and the total cost of the trial?

*Answer:*

Fifty Tongan Pacific seasonal workers were recruited by Tree Minders Pty Ltd and arrived in Australia on 16 February 2009. These Pacific seasonal workers harvested almonds and pruned almond trees in Robinvale, Victoria.

From 15 June 2009, these Pacific seasonal workers took up employment with All Recruiting Services Pty Ltd as a result of the financial collapse of Timbercorp, and were moved to either Munduberra, Queensland to pick citrus (oranges, lemons and murcots) or Mildura, Victoria to prune table grape vines and to pick citrus (oranges and lemons).

Forty six of the Tongan Pacific seasonal workers departed Australia on 10 September 2009. Three Tongan Pacific seasonal workers departed Australia on 10 August 2009 after losing family members in a Tongan ferry accident. A fourth Tongan Pacific seasonal worker departed Australia on 9 September following the death of his father.

Six ni-Vanuatu Pacific seasonal workers were recruited by Summit Personnel and arrived in Australia on 15 April 2009. Collectively, these Pacific seasonal workers harvested figs, capsicums, oranges, and lemons in Griffith, packed oranges in Leeton, and pruned stone fruit trees in Swan Hill. The six ni-Vanuatu Pacific seasonal workers departed Australia on 25 October 2009.

#### **Cost to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship**

- The cost to the Department to date (November 2009) is \$2 134 450.
- The funds for the Department are largely to provide administrative support, visa processing and community relations activities, including grants of \$1.2m over 4 years.
- The total cost of the Pilot will not be known until the trial is completed.
- The Pilot is demand driven therefore the scale of the Pilot will only be known once completed.

### **Involvement of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship**

- The Department is responsible for the arranging for the entry of people into Australia under the Pilot scheme. This includes utilising standard assessments such as health and character screening before a decision is made on an application.
- The Department is responsible for the monitoring of the Special Program Agreements to ensure the terms of agreement are being met. Australian employers enter into Agreements with the Department to cover visa arrangements for workers
- The Department develops and funds a number of community relations projects within the selected locations to promote community cohesion. Activities focus on developing cultural awareness and understanding between the Pacific island workers and members of local and indigenous communities and incorporate consultations with employers, relevant state government agencies, local government, community organisations, industry groups and police and other services.

### **Total cost of the Pilot**

- Any questions regarding total cost should be referred to DEEWR which is responsible for administering the Pilot.