

The Senate

Standing Committee on
Employment, Workplace
Relations and Education

Perspectives on the future of the harvest
labour force

October 2006

© Commonwealth of Australia

ISBN 0 642 71719 2

This document was produced by the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education and printed by the Senate Printing Unit, Department of the Senate, Parliament House, Canberra.

Membership of the Committee

Members

Senator Judith Troeth	LP, Victoria	Chair
Senator Gavin Marshall	ALP, Victoria	Deputy Chair
Senator Guy Barnett	LP, Tasmania	
Senator George Campbell	ALP, New South Wales	
Senator Mitch Fifield	LP, Victoria	
Senator Ross Lightfoot	LP, Western Australia	
Senator Anne McEwen	ALP, South Australia	
Senator Natasha Stott Despoja	AD, South Australia	

Secretariat

John Carter,
Secretary

Tim Watling,
Senior Research Officer

Lynette Aungiers,
Executive Assistant

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
Committee Secretariat

Department of the Senate

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: 02 6277 3521

Fax: 02 6277 5706

E-mail: eet.sen@aph.gov.au

Internet: www.aph.gov.au/senate_employment

Table of Contents

Membership of the Committee	iii
Preface	vii
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
The horticulture industry	2
Current arrangements in relation to foreign labour	3
Current debate in regard to temporary foreign labour.....	5
More than a labour market issue	10
Chapter 2	13
The question of labour shortages in horticulture	13
Seasonal work: a profile	14
Characteristics of the horticultural industry	15
Characteristics of the current seasonal workforce.....	20
Is there currently a labour shortage?	23
Attracting unemployed and indigenous workers.....	28
Accommodation	29
Summary of the evidence	30
Conclusion	33
Chapter 3	35
Labour from the South Pacific	35
Introduction to Australia in the South Pacific region.....	35
Remittances	39

The WTO angle	42
Our relationship with Pacific states on labour migration	44
Chapter 4	47
Practicalities of a seasonal contract labour scheme	47
Serving national and regional interests	48
Regulation of a seasonal labour scheme.....	49
Recruitment and labour management.....	49
Pay and working conditions	50
Visa compliance	51
Accommodation	52
Transport, insurance and other matters	53
Community relations	54
Conclusion.....	55
Senator Barnett's supplementary comments	57
Appendix 1	61
List of Submissions	61
Appendix 2.....	65
Hearings and Witnesses	65
Appendix 3.....	71
The Canadian program for foreign agricultural labour	71
Appendix 4.....	73
Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO)	73