

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into Pacific region seasonal contract labour

Submission no: 13

Received: 10/03/2006

Submitter: Ms Merylyn Leona Temakon

Organisation: Private Sector Lobby Group
Export of Ni-Vanuatu Labour

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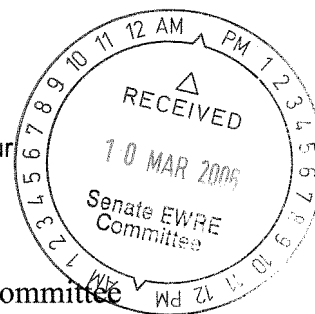
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Sent: Friday, 10 March 2006 1:24 PM
To: EET, Committee (SEN)
Subject: Submission for Inquiry into Pacific Region seasonal contract labour

**SUBMISSION**

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee

Re :Inquiry into Pacific Region seasonal contract labour

Submitter : Marilyn Leona Temakon

Organisation : Private Sector Lobby Group on Export of Ni-Vanuatu labour, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

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Introduction

Vanuatu has a population of approximately 200,000 people only, situated east of Australia and listed as an LDC or least developed country and ranks 10th poorest of the 12 Pacific Island Countries. There are three main factors amongst others which cause this poor economy. Firstly, the geographical location which is a distance from international markets causing high production and transportation costs, the heavy reliance on external aid by the Vanuatu government, the dual economy meaning that only approximately 18,000 people are employed in the formal economy whilst the rest which is about 180,000 depend for their livelihood on subsistence farming. Therefore Vanuatu cannot levy income tax as only a small percentage of workers can be taxed. Vanuatu is also prone to natural disasters such as cyclones, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Vanuatu's 40% percent of the population is under the age of 40 years old and only about 2% of the population has had tertiary education whilst the rest are semi literate or illiterate.

Our submission to the Senate committee is as follows :

1. It would be easier for Australia to select only one Melanesian country in the Pacific to start a pilot or test program for the following reasons :
 - a) A test program will give Australia the chance to find out the problems of employers, the contract workers, the disadvantages and advantages of the program and to develop a good and better viable program for long term purposes with all the other countries.
 - b) A test program will be small and easier to manage for both the Australian and the sending country in areas of travelling arrangements, the accomodation, their quality of work itself, the arrangement for payment of wages earned, the control of visas and other issues affecting the program.
2. Australia should select Vanuatu only under a Bilateral arrangement for the test program for the following reasons:-
 - a) Vanuatu receives aid from Australia and has always been on good terms with each other
 - b) Vanuatu is an LDC or Least Developed Country and ranks 10th poorest amongst the 12 Pacific island nations therefore justifies assistance in opening of labour market for her people

- c). Vanuatu has very little law and order problems than its other melanesian countries such as PNG and Solomon
- d) Vanuatu has a small population therefore the number of workers from Vanuatu will only be small and easily managable
- e) Vanautu is closer to Australia, only 3 to 4 hours flight.
- f) Vanuatu already has agreements with Australia on assistants with the the Law Enforcement such as Police Force therefore, it would be just an extension of the arrangements and will be easier for Australia to monitor any contract labour arrangement.
- g) the American government has signed an agreement for Vanuatu to access the Millenium Challenge Corporation money therefore, maybe if the American Government has identified Vanuatu for good reasons maybe the Australian government can also do the same for a test program with seasonal labour contract.
- h) Vanuatu pays into Australia approximately 4 billion vatu per year for rice, flour and other imported products whilst, Australia only gives Aus\$300,000.00 as aid to Vanautu. There is an obligation for Australia to balance this out by creating special arrangement for Ni-Vanuatu workers to be able to work in Australia.
- i) The majority of the people of Vanuatu will only leave Vanuatu to an overseas country for a good reason otherwise, normally Ni-Vanuatu people do not travel much and love their own country. That is why the Australian government should be reassured that very little percentage of the Ni-Vanuatu workers will not adhere to control rules. Mostly, Ni-Vanuatu's are open, law abiding and and respectful.

3) If Vanuatu is selected for a test program then ddministrative and management control measures and structures are to be created in order to control Ni-Vanuatu wanting to work in Australia. This will involve too the Vanuatu National Council of Chiefs and the National Council of Churches. Our Committee is already requesting the Vanuatu government to make preparations in this area. We are getting some support from the European Union.

4) There is need for the Australian Senate Committee to consider approving a training manual or training program or an orientation package to be established along with this seasonal contract labour to address issues such as the type of work itself, change of custom and cultures, change of climate, language, forms of transportation, simple manners etc.

5) If a bilateral agreement is reached between the Government of Australia and that of Vanuatu, then Vanuatu will need to have a policy on labour mobility and establish laws and regulations to control and monitor the work of the employment agencies , and to adhere to the conditions and the bilateral agreements.

6) Remission of monies earned in Australia back into Vanuatu's economies

Since the wholse purpose for this seasonal contract labour program would be to address the labour shortages in Australia and to assist the weak economies of the sending country, over 9,000 people here in Vanuatu have already agreed to and signed a petition which our Committee here has organised that they agree to work outside of Vanuatu, and also that they agree to remit small percentage or part of their earnings back to Vanuatu for the following purposes :

- to maintain their aging parents
- to maintain their wives, husbands and children
- to put 2% of their earnings towards an educational fund for compulsory education up to year 13 for Ni-Vanuatu children
- to pay into their national provident fund where they can access during old age
- to become a member of a workers union and to pay their union contribution
- to make a small savings in the cooperative savings here in Vanuatu.

This arrangement will certainly be very helpful towards boosting the foreign earnings of Vanuatu and the country's economy.

7. Short Term Employment

The majority of the Ni-Vanuatu people will agree to short term contract labour which would be within a period of three(3) to six (6) months period.

8. Australian Government to lay down the rules
it is important that Australia lay down the rules with the assistant of the sending countries. If Vanuatu is selected then Vanuatu through the Vanuatu Government and the various communities should also assist the Australian Government to create the rules and conditions.

9. Others areas of work apart from agriculture
As already stated, 40% of Vanuatu's population is under the age of 40 therefore, most of the young people have technical training in various forms and it would be good for the Australian Government to consider other areas of contract labour markets which young Ni-Vanuatu's can also find short term or medium employment.

10. House keeping work and gardening
House keeping and gardening are two types of jobs which the majority of Ni-Vanuatu people can do. These can be done also on short term.

We notice between now and August a team from the Senate Committee will go out into the Pacific Island countries to visit governments and communities. We are inviting the Senate Committee to visit Vanuatu and our group for further discussion. Please after having read this submission, please do contact me by this email address for confirmation that you have recieved this submission. Also please if any members of the Senate want to find out more or wish to discuss any thing i have suggested, please do not hesitate to contact me by this email or by my phone number.

I wish to thank you for this opportunity to make our submission.

God bless all

MERILYN LEONA TEMAKON
Secretary

Yahoo! Mail
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