

Mr John Carter
Secretary
Australian Senate
Employment, Workplace Relations & Education
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

14.3.2006



ahea

ABN: 42 141 086 602

Dear Mr Carter,

Re: Senate enquiry into effect on export of Pacific seasonal contract labour.

AHEA Members have advised that while all of our seasonal crops are affected by seasonal labour shortages, the vegetable industry is the worst affected.

Over the past 5 years our industry has suffered a number of major crack-down raids by Immigration services at the peak of the various harvests when labour demand is at its highest.

While our packers take every reasonable step to ensure all staff are legally entitled to work, these raids seriously disrupt their businesses & create havoc amongst industry members.

This year we had several packers that virtually closed their doors for 2-4 days as staff failed to show the following day. This resulted in a significant acreage being lost for the remainder of the season, as once it is missed in picking rotation it was impossible to catch up.

Whilst we are unsure of the exact dollar losses, it was significant to those affected and to export efforts in particular. Even packers that didn't have people caught on the day suffered.

These growers offer above award rates and still can't attract sufficient local (Australian) labour for this type of work, despite potentially high returns to good workers. They are often forced to use contractors who sometimes may employ illegal workers that either swap or use false ID's etc.

The grower is most often, not to blame.

Yours Sincerely

Maxwell Summers

Maxwell Summers – CEO
AHEA