

04 April 2006

Committee Secretary
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee
Department of Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

In February of last year I wrote to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs regarding the Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board's (SMEDB) proposal to import contract seasonal workers into Victoria from China.

As of the date of my correspondence to the Minister the Mildura Harvest Labour office (MADEC) did not have any unfilled labour needs and I was, therefore, surprised at the request for some 10,000 imported workers.

There was and is little community support for their proposal and no matter what measures are put in place a significant number of Chinese contractors would simply disappear upon arrival for work in Australia.

Additionally, I remain concerned at the possibility of an overall erosion of wages and conditions in the industry that overseas labour may prompt.

As there are 2 million Australians who are either underemployed or unemployed the concept is ludicrous.

The response I received from Minister McGauran to the concerns I raised in my initial correspondence was that the government had no intention of pursuing such a policy of labour importation for China or for anywhere else, however the initiation of this inquiry appears contradictory to this advice and indicates a softening of the government's originally stated stance on the issue.

As the local state MP I reiterate my unequivocal opposition to the proposal to import overseas labour for harvest purposes and I attach a copy of a media release outlining this opposition.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Russell Savage MLA
MEMBER FOR MILDURA