

28 August 2008

To the Secretary

Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee In response to your invitation to make a submission to the, Inquiry into the main economic and security challenges facing Papua New Guinea and the Island States of the Southwest Pacific

I accept the invitation to assist in the inquiry.

With more than 20 seasons of seasonal work mainly fruit picking and pruning in the Goulburn Valley Victoria and other places, I believe I can assist the senate inquiry with some recommendations on how to help and benefit the peoples of the neighboring regional nations who will be coming to participate in the seasonal workplaces of Australia.

I welcome and applaud the governments decision to allow for employment opportunities to the struggling peoples of our region who`s economic and social sufferings should not be ignored. Its apparent that there is in some places a unemployment rate of 4 of 5 with out a job and the prospect for some of never being employed. There is also evidence that this unacceptable high rate of unemployment has been fueling the violence, unrest, political instability and social suffering in the region.

Fruit picking is al thou as straight forward and simple as it may seem requires some time to learn proficiency as it is usually low paid and the guest workers will need to be proficient to earn some sort of respectable wage from it .Overtime, long days and weekend work are a necessary also to earn a respectable wage. without these most guest or local workers most likely wont do well.

So the government and employers need to take this seriously into account when employing guest workers and make adequate allowances for this especially in there first few seasons while they are gaining experience, if they are put on a award piece rate wage. Accommodation and the high cost of living here will greatly eat into their wages, especially accommodation if they live on the workplace they should be only charged for their electricity and other utilities they use and not be there as another form of profit for the employer, they will work days for little pay, overtime on overtime, for not much gain at times and should not have their wages reduced to pay for accommodation that are usually just bearable. Its just not a matter of need but principle too. If they live in towns etc and rent accommodation they will need big houses where they can live together to save on expenses. I myself moved into my caravan and prefer to live on the workplaces to better cope with high expenses and low incomes.

Decent quality equipment is important for earning better wages if put on a award piece rate or other wise earnings can be substantially diminished. e.g. air secateurs should supplied for most pruning work rather than ordinary garden type secateurs.

Every possible reduction in their living expenses and increase of the award piece rate the government and employers can provide the guest workers will help them prosper and be rewarded more fairly for their time and efforts over here and return home with some more success.

Yours sincerely

G. A. Beecroft